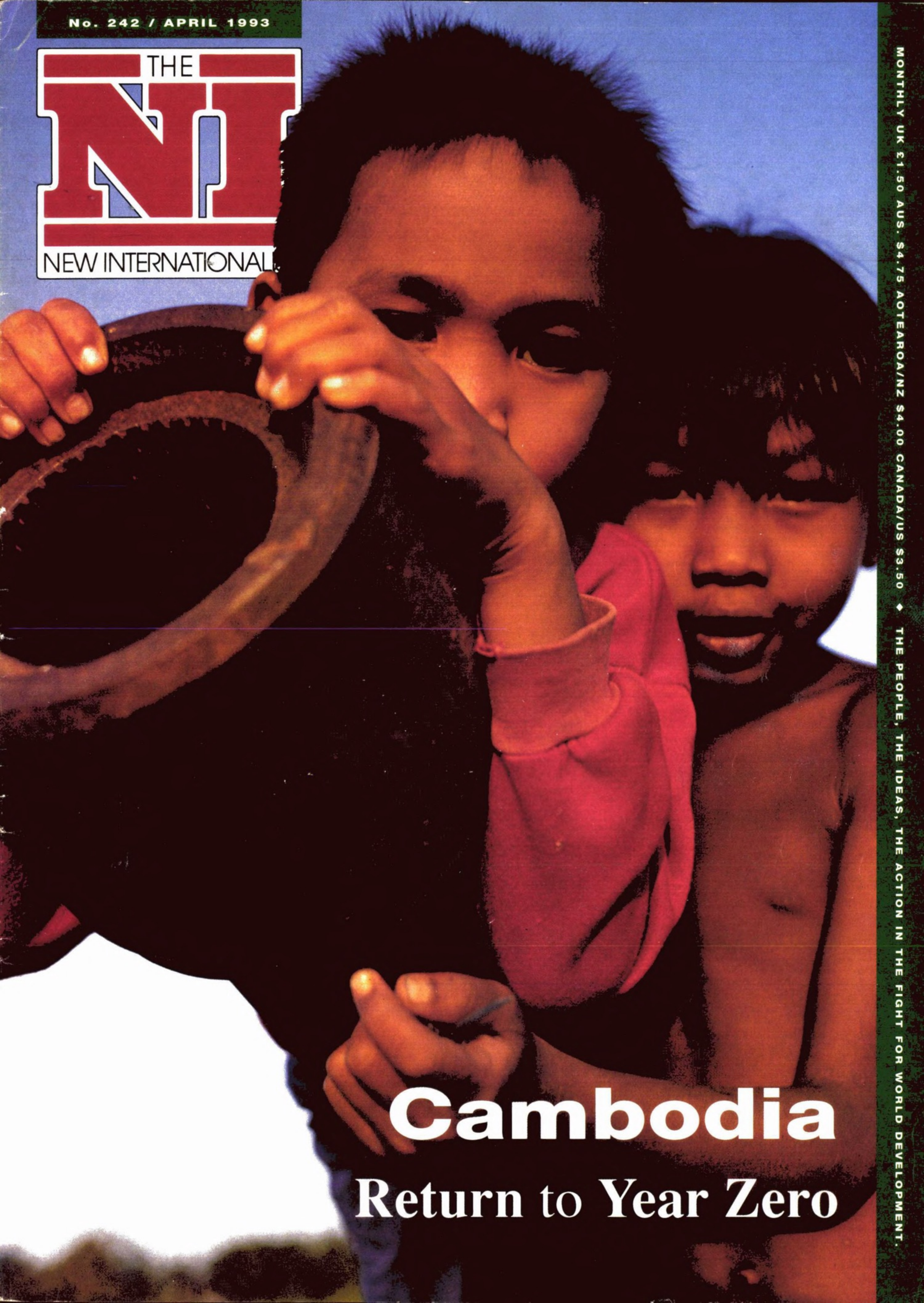
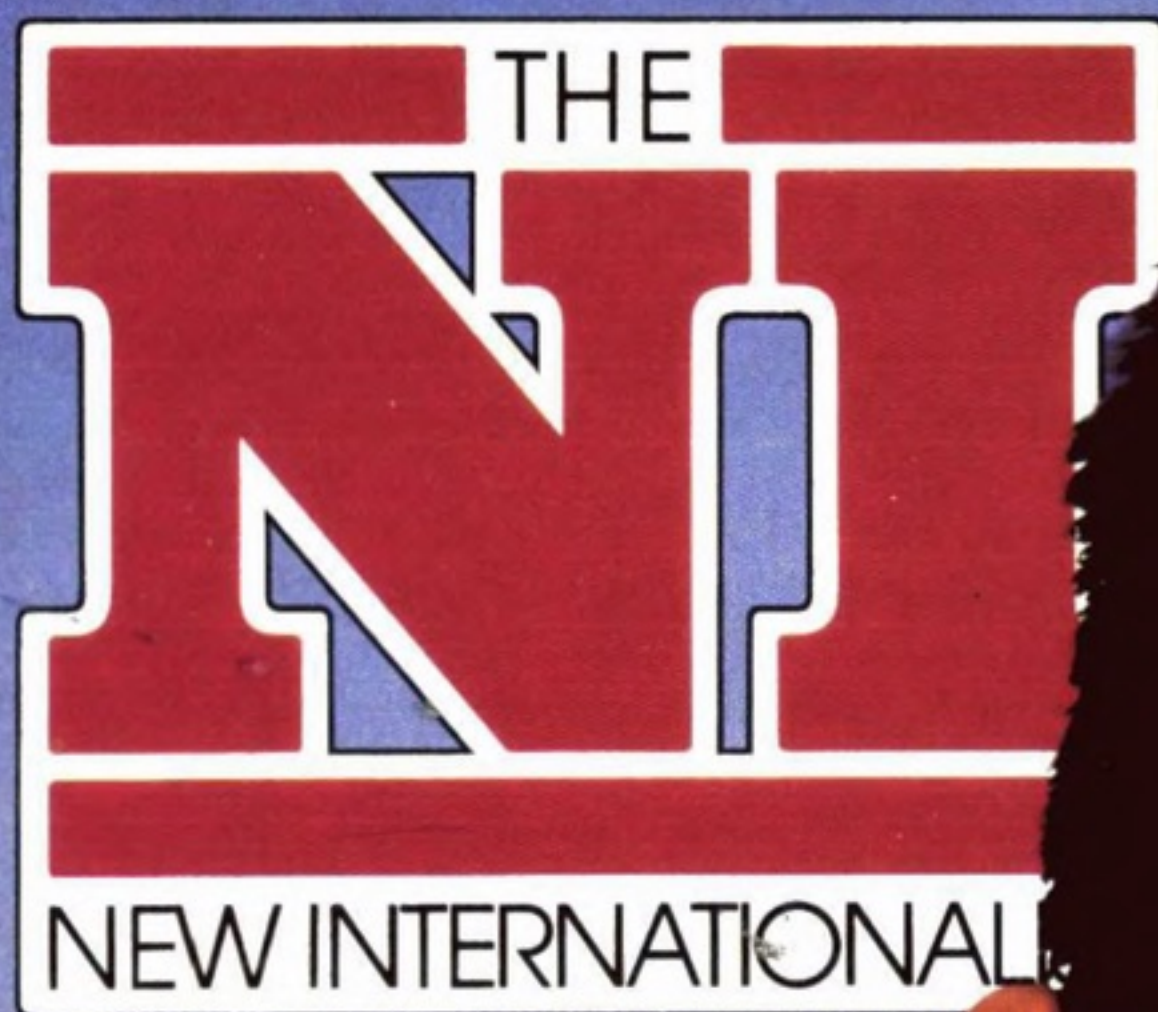


No. 242 / APRIL 1993



Cambodia

Return to Year Zero

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The **New Internationalist** magazine is published by **New Internationalist Publications Ltd** which is wholly owned by the **New Internationalist Trust** and co-operatively run by:- Vanessa Baird, Chris Brazier, Wayne Ellwood, Alan Hughes, Jana Mahalingam, Guy Montgomery, Gill Moore, Clive Offley, David Ransom, James Rowland, Debbie Simms, Richard Swift, Dexter Tiranti, Jim Turner, Troth Wells. The **New Internationalist** magazine was founded by Peter and Lesley Adamson in 1970.

SUBSCRIPTION ENQUIRIES

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SUBSCRIPTION OFFICES AND ANNUAL PRICES

UK: 120-126 Lavender Ave, Mitcham, Surrey CR4 3HP. Tel. (081) 685 0372.

Individuals £18.40 p.a.; £5.40 qtlly.

Institutions £35 p.a.

Canada: 35 Riviera Drive, Unit 17, Markham, Ontario L3R 8N4. Tel. (416) 946 0406. Fax (416) 946 0410.

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Individuals A\$37.50; Institutions A\$47.00.

Aotearoa /New Zealand: PO Box 1905, Christchurch. Individuals \$42 Institutions \$49 (includes GST).

Rest of the World: 120 - 126 Lavender Ave, Mitcham, Surrey CR4 3HP. Tel. (081) 685 0372.

Individuals £22; Institutions £40. Please pay in sterling by UK Cheque, Eurocheque, Visa, Mastercard or Banker's Draft. Despatch by air only.

EDITORIAL AND ADVERTISING OFFICES

UK: 55 Rectory Road, Oxford OX4 1BW. Tel. (0865) 728181. Fax. (0865) 793152. [Advertising: Tel. (0384) 373421. Fax. (0384) 441904]

Canada: 1011 Bloor Street West, Toronto, Ontario M6H 1M1. Tel. (416) 588 6478. Fax: (416) 537 6435.

Australia: PO Box 82, Fitzroy, Victoria 3065. Tel. (03) 419 7111.

MAILINGS

Occasionally we allow organizations to mail our subscribers. If you do not wish to receive their material please write to your subscription office.

The **NI** is printed by Cradley Print Ltd, Warley, West Midlands, UK.

The **NI** is distributed to the UK news trade by COMAG Specialist Division, Mercury Centre, Central Way, Feltham, Middlesex TW14 0RX. Tel. (081) 844 1000. Fax. (081) 751 2666.

The **NI** in North America (USPS 329-770) is published monthly by **New Internationalist Publications**, 1011 Bloor Street West, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M6H 1M1. US 2nd class postage paid at Lewiston, NY. US Post-master send address changes to: The **NI**, P O Box 1143, Lewiston, NY 14092. US Office of Publication, Lewiston, NY 14092. Registered with Alternative Press Index.

Syndication/Permissions: Cover Stories, The Observer, Chelsea Bridge House, Queenstown Road, London SW8 4NN. Tel. (071) 350 3208. Fax. (071) 627 5570.

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This is the daughter



The Hills sent to law school



Using savings they kept
in their bank



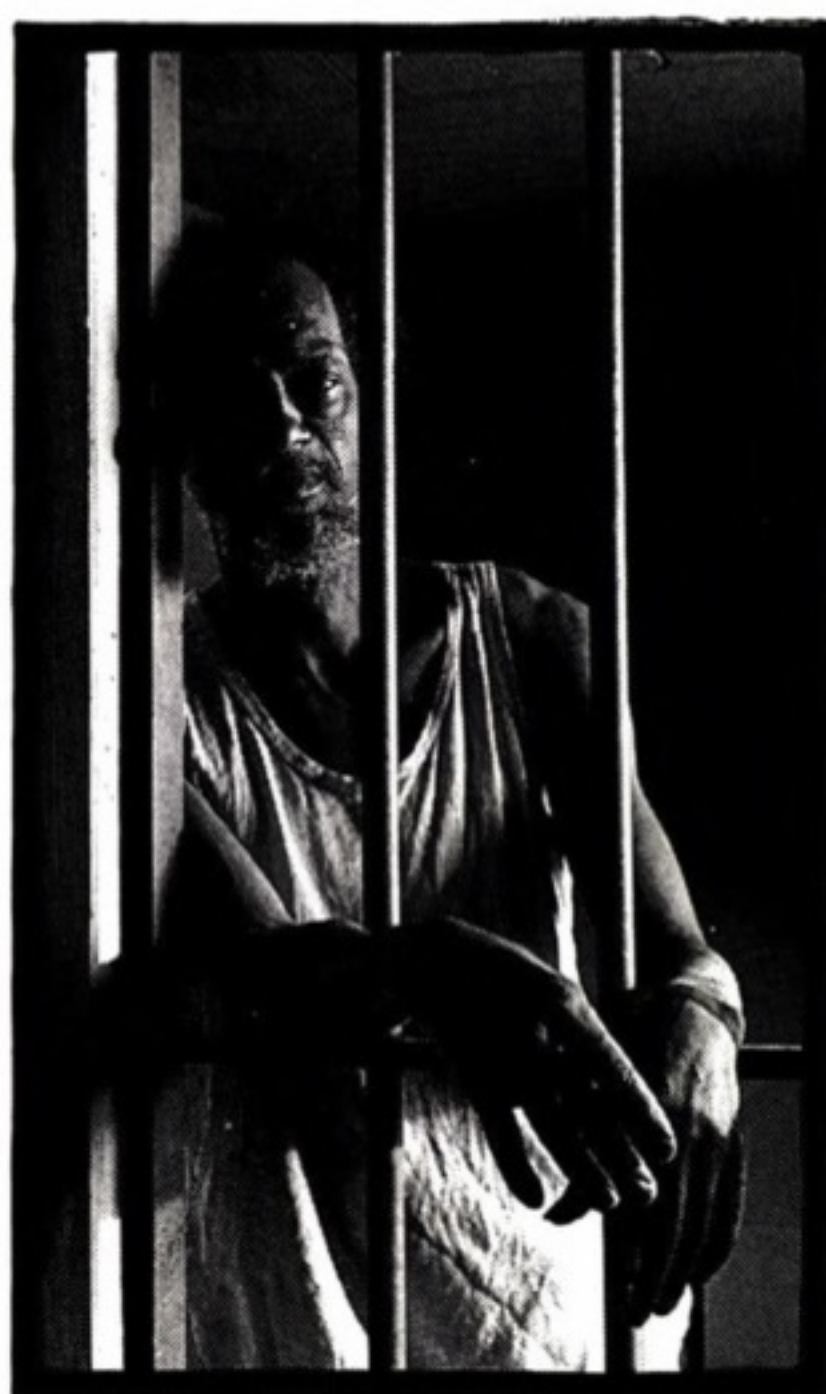
Which their bank
had invested



Abroad in a country



That denies
most of its people



Legal rights.

It happens.

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peace of mind our customers receive one other
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The CO-OPERATIVE BANK

THIS MONTH'S THEME

Cambodia

FROM THIS MONTH'S EDITOR

THIS special issue of the **NI** on Cambodia gives me a great deal of satisfaction, not only because of the opportunity to tell Cambodia's story in some detail, but because it allows me to repay a little of what I owe this remarkable magazine. For many years I have read the **NI** with great respect; I have filed its specialist pieces, its charts and glossaries and recommended it to people who are fed up with the suppression of development issues in the 'mainstream' media. Many an article I have written and film I have made have had their roots in something I read in the **NI**.

The cover title, *Return to Year Zero*, is also the title of the sixth documentary film David Munro and I have made about Cambodia and which goes on air on ITV in Britain on 20 April and thereafter in some 30 countries. This issue of the **NI**, like the film, sounds a clear warning: that the Khmer Rouge may be on their way back to power in a Trojan Horse built for them by the United Nations, or rather by the governments of the US, Britain, China, Australia and other purveyors of a 'peace plan' that has legitimized those responsible for the 'killing fields'.

I believe that, in the fragments of news about Cambodia, the Cambodian people lose. They are invariably represented as a geopolitical 'problem', as 'warring factions' refusing to have their heads banged together by the wise counsellors of the West. Never mind that one of these 'factions' is controlled by Asia's Hitler. Never mind that the West's euphemisms for Pol Pot's crimes – such as 'the policies and practices of the recent past' – are designed to appease and accommodate the underwriters of genocide.

For me this is both an important and urgent issue of **NI**, for it draws together the past and the present and looks nervously into the future beyond the UN-sponsored elections in May. It also complements our television documentary by raising questions that only the printed page can.

I hasten to add that I am privileged to edit an issue that publishes the work of expert witnesses to Cambodia's tragedy and hope: Ben Kiernan, one of the world's leading Khmer-speaking scholars; his wife Chanthou Boua, the survivor of a family devastated by the Khmer Rouge; Paul Donovan of Action Cambodia UK, who has been my co-editor and has done so much to raise awareness about Cambodia in many countries; Joan Healy, whose understanding of Khmer country people is reflected in her fine prose; Nic Dunlop and Claude Sauvageot, whose superb photographs reflect their care for Cambodia. I would also like to pay tribute to the excellent work of Raoul Jennar, Paul Davies and Peter Carey.

'If understanding is impossible,' wrote Primo Levi of the Jewish holocaust, 'knowing is imperative, because what happened could happen again.' If these pages add something to that knowledge they will have succeeded.

John Pilger
for the *New Internationalist* Co-operative

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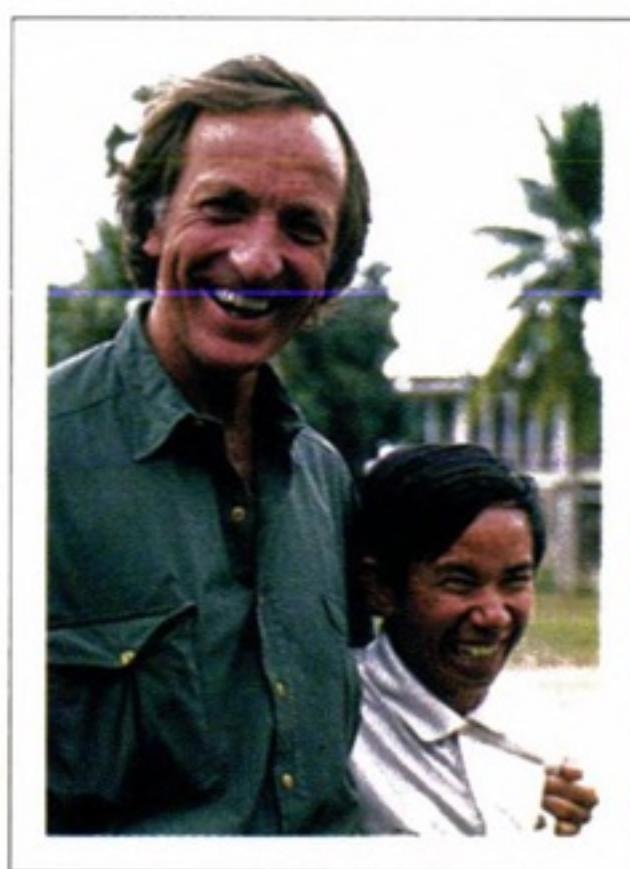
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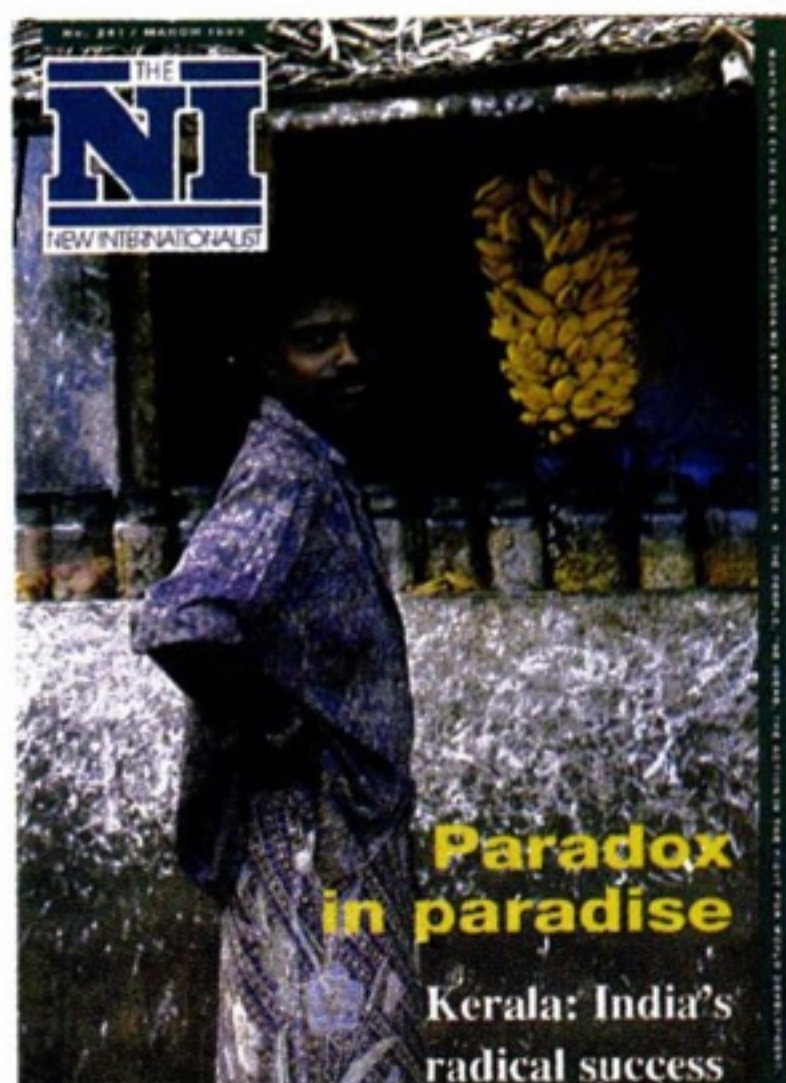
FRONT COVER PHOTOGRAPH: CAMBODIAN CHILDREN AT PLAY ON A GUTTED TANK, 1992, BY NIC DUNLOP.



Above: John Pilger with Chay Song Heng, friend and interpreter.

Blood wanted

At last! With the March issue (*Paradox in paradise* NI 241) New Internationalist seemed willing to focus on a success story instead of the usual guilt-inducing fare of hunger, war, misery and inequality. Better still, the entire magazine was in full colour.



I was particularly interested in the vastly superior status of women in Kerala compared with those in other parts of the developing world. So I turned eagerly to the article entitled 'Respect and respectability' – only to find it focused almost entirely on highly educated women complaining about the poor status of women!

Why did you not focus on ordinary, uneducated women? Is it because you could not find them in Kerala – and if so does that not speak volumes about how good things really are?

I'm sorry but I couldn't help feeling that there was an element of whingeing here. Is there no limit to the demands of feminist women, either in the North or the South? What more do they want? Blood?

J Bowen
Stratford, UK

Helping girls

Your article 'Maids of all work' (*Girls* NI 240) by Judith Ennew showed the desperation of young girls caught in a vicious circle of poverty. I can hardly imagine what it must be like to be caught in an existence which offers no hope for a way out.

Ms Ennew's article really does bring home the shocking facts. But although it showed that there are people working to



The **New Internationalist** welcomes your letters. But please keep them short. They may be edited for purposes of space or clarity. Include a home telephone number if possible and send your letters to the nearest editorial office. The address is inside the front cover.

give the girls hope and understanding, it left this reader feeling powerless.

What can I do? Could you please give me information about the Passage House and suggest other ways in which these girls can be helped?

Luisa Osborne
Plymouth, UK

Editor: How about supporting or joining one of the campaigning organizations listed in the Action section (page 28) of NI 240? For more information about the Passage House contact Womankind, 122 Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7PT.

Christ the adulterer

Having lived in Pakistan for about eight years, during the course of my Islamic theological training there, I can only endorse the truth of social and religious discrimination against Christians described in the *Letter from Lahore* in NI 239.

It would have been better still if connections had been made with other forms of discrimination along the lines of gender, class, caste and race. For example, the fairer Goan Christians are not subject to the same discrimination as the darker-

skinned Punjabi Christians.

However the *Letter's* allegation that the Muslim priests or maulvis said that Jesus was 'not a prophet, but an adulterer' is incredible. Anyone remotely acquainted with Islam and Muslim society will know that the question of Jesus' prophethood and holiness is basic to Muslim belief and universally accepted. This comment would not come from an illiterate villager – let alone a maulvi.

Maulvi Farid Esack
Birmingham, UK.

Culture cure

Thanks, NI, for the education you are giving me – and us. I am of mixed Angolan and white South African parentage and only since leaving school have I seen how much of the history of the world I was denied. I feel very alienated when I see and experience the daily repercussions of that history in racial discrimination. But at black consciousness meetings I have found people coming together with knowledge and experience and becoming re-educated and empowered. These black community movements are a wonderful example of how misinformation can be dismantled by young individuals – not

only through books and facts but also through culture and entertainment.

With NI turning to full colour I think this would make a wonderful topic for an issue. Ours is a rich growing culture which – like a scientific culture – can help cure the world's diseases.

Sister Thardiwe
London, UK

Hard words

Your *Hard Work* issue (NI 239) was visually compelling but intellectually unchallenging. The real story, which you only lightly touched on, is the psychological aspect of work – how it shapes our beliefs and the way we see ourselves and others.

David Blais
Ottawa, Canada

UN-backed barbarism

When a British soldier was recently killed in Bosnia, it was said that a murder charge would be brought if the killer could be found. Israel has had no difficulty in avenging murders – often with multiples of counter-murders and destruction.

Would it therefore be reasonable for the families of the two women receptionists killed at the Al Rashid Hotel in Baghdad to seek so-called 'justice'? Perhaps they could bring civilian charges, if they were able to trust the US judges. Or perhaps, 'Tel Aviv' style, they could simply kill anyone who belongs to the United Nations.

These gross acts of barbarism committed by the US, Britain and France could never be construed as legal or moral and there is no evidence to show that they have the support of world opinion. When will the UN have to account to a properly constituted authority – instead of being accountable only to its economic paymasters?

Philip Barker
Redlynch, UK.

Happy gullibility

Robert Jones' letter headed 'Garbage trailblazer' (*Letters* NI 239) in which he sanctimoniously claimed to produce only two kilos of rubbish a year

Naive softie?

I support NI as a magazine that tries to expose myths, but I get so morose reading about injustice, waste and cruelty. Sometimes I have to force myself to read all the articles, like an act of penance.

Is it not possible to lighten up a little and focus occasionally on the positive, progressive and encouraging developments in the world? Or am I being a naive softie?

Peter Stevenson
Reading, UK

"The good news is – world economists say that things can't get much worse."



made me blazing angry until I realized it was a put-on and that the town address he gave, WhataWhata, was not in the Australian postcode directory.

Those who see recycling as the total answer to the problems of population and environment do come up with some bizarre inanities, ranging from 'recycling toilet paper' – which I actually heard on a talk-back show – to an engineer's suggestion that we recycle 'the backwashings from the municipal water treatment plant filters'.

It reminds me of a man whose garden was almost entirely taken up with a colossal water storage tank – although he lived in a heavy rainfall region. He let the house while on an extended holiday and returned to find a brick in his toilet flush tank.

Sensible recycling is just that – sensible. It is not the answer to our problems – despite media attempts to keep the gullible happy.

Lloyd Smith
Mullumbimby, Australia

Map omissions

Your Peters projection map of the World aims to correct the usual distorted world maps.

But why then is the independent state of Tibet, invaded by the Chinese in 1959, included in the People's Republic of China? Tibet is named on the map – but then so is Manchester!

It seems to me that the map has little value if it cannot represent individual countries fairly and with due thought to the aspirations of the people there. And what about Kurdistan and Palestine? These too deserve representation on a politically correct map.

Gareth Taylor
Manchester, UK

Editor: We are passing on your comments to Arno Peters, the creator of the map. The idea of a 'politically correct' map which takes account of the regions you mention and presents the world not just as it currently is but also as we think it should be is an interesting one which we will be considering.

The views expressed on the letters page are not necessarily those of the NI.

LETTER from LAHORE

Splashing out on the headline

How can ordinary Pakistanis afford their lavish celebrations? By giving banks a miss, **Maria del Nevo** discovers.

PAKISTAN has one of the lowest savings rates in the world. According to a Lahore banker, less than one per cent of the population – known as the 'elite' – control banking, while less than eight per cent of the middle class use it. This leaves over 90 per cent who find the system virtually inaccessible.

Saving in the banks is generally unpopular because of *zakat*, which is an obligatory charitable donation of 2.5 per cent against a Muslim person's total wealth. Saving at home is difficult because, with the average family ranging from six to eight people, consumption tends to outweigh the average wage and any money kept at home more often than not gets spent on various household expenses.

So from where do the majority of Pakistanis get the money to pay for the lavish weddings, dowries, birth celebrations and funerals which are so integral to their culture? The answer is through 'the committee', an indigenous saving system that goes back long before Europeans brought their banking system to the sub-Continent. And today it continues to operate effectively, with the complete confidence of those using it.

Any member of a community can start a committee and there are nearly always several running at one time, each for different sums depending on how much the members need. The committee can, therefore, go on for years. For example, if a family needs a sofa set, then they will join a committee which is set at something like Rs 2,000. Every month they will pay Rs 250 and a ballot determines which month each family receives the total amount. Every member continues making their monthly payments until the committee ends.

The ballot is not always final – if one family needs the money earlier then there can always be an agreement to swap with another member. And special provisions are made for anyone getting married.

'I didn't have to take part in the ballot,' says Azhar, a 28-year-old computer technician who

got married recently. 'I just continued to pay the monthly sum and then a little while before my marriage date was set I informed the committee and received the money.'

Azhar is planning to join another committee once his wedding expenses are paid off – this time to buy a house. 'We need a separate place now because once my five younger brothers get married we won't all be able to live in these four rooms.'

Azhar and his family, like the many thousands of families in Pakistan, have total faith in the system. 'Committees have really improved our standard of living. Before we used them we only had our father's salary and a very tight budget. We had to borrow money from relatives when a wedding came along or when there were extra educational costs to be met. There were a lot of problems and worries

about paying it all back.'

Joining a committee is the only way the average person can feel confident about saving and meeting huge expenses. 'When you keep savings at home the money eventually gets spent,' says Azhar. 'When it's in the bank, you can easily draw it out. But when it's in a committee run by the neighbourhood then it's safe. By joining committees you can start planning. Like our family has done.'

But with Pakistan's widespread corruption and poverty, I couldn't help wondering about the safety of committees; of the risk of someone getting paid the full amount early on, running off with the money and never paying it back.

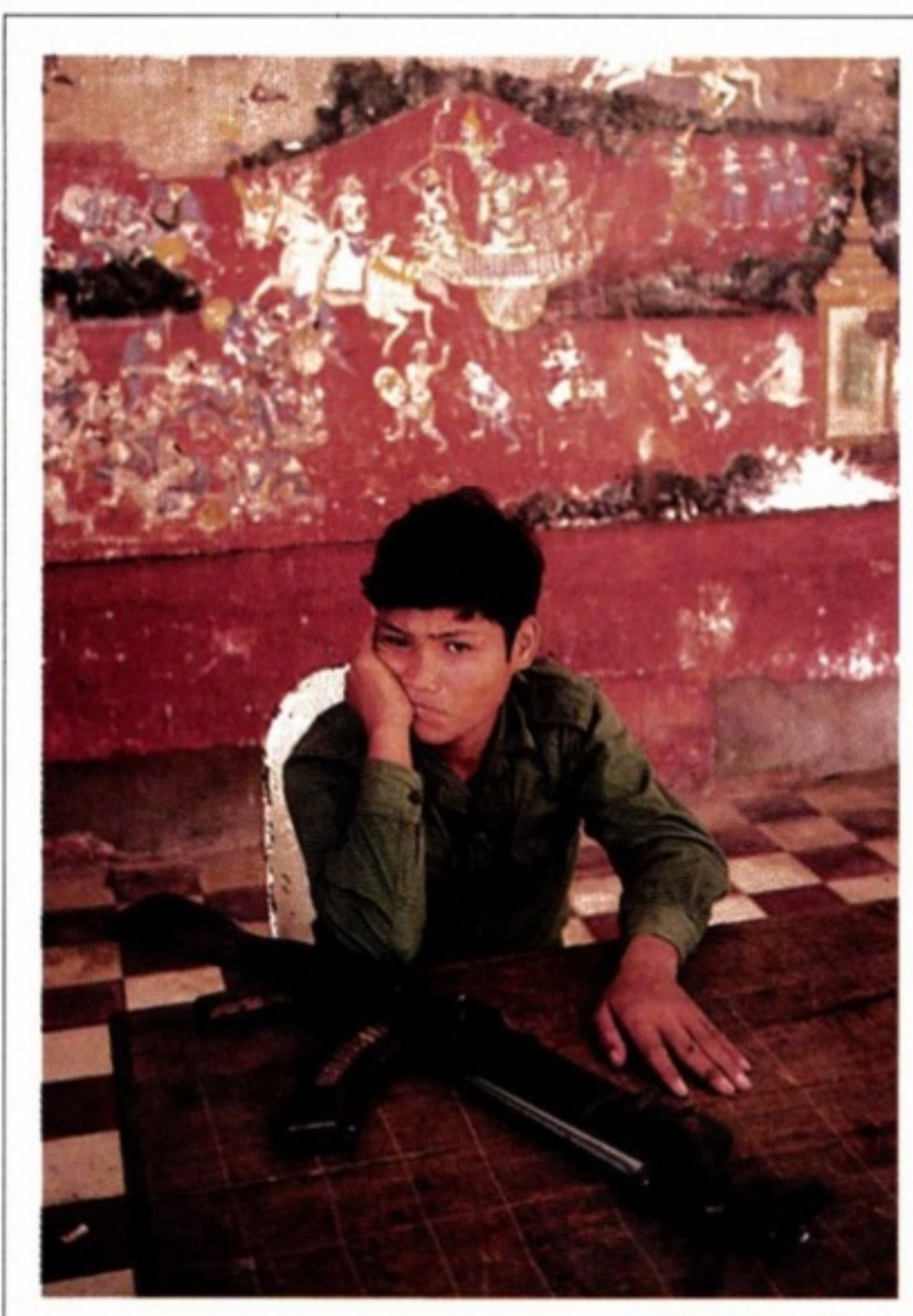
'No,' says Azhar, shaking his head. 'That has never happened to us. Committees are run within localities or with close relatives and friends. Everyone knows beforehand what the other earns. In this way, we are assured that each member will be able to pay up on time every month. You have to know the people well, you have to trust them.'

Maria del Nevo is a former NI staff member who now lives and works in Lahore.



MIRIAM MCCURDY

Return to Year Zero



CLAUDE SAUVAGEOT

*The Khmer Rouge slaughtered a fifth of the Cambodian people between 1975 and 1979. **John Pilger**, who was among the first to alert the world to the Cambodian 'killing fields' and their aftermath, describes how the politics of international convenience has built a Trojan Horse for their return.*

IT is my duty,' wrote the correspondent of *The Times* at the time of liberation of the Nazi death camp at Belsen, 'to describe something beyond the imagination of mankind.' That was how I felt in the summer of 1979. During 22 years as a journalist, most of them spent in transit at places of uncertainty and upheaval, I had not seen anything to compare with what I saw then in Cambodia.

My aircraft flew low, following the unravelling of the Mekong River west from Vietnam. Once over Cambodia, there appeared to be no-one, no movement, not even an animal, as if the great population of Asia had stopped at the border. Nothing seemed to have been planted nor was

growing, except the forest, and the mangrove and lines of tall wild grass. On the edge of towns this grass would follow straight lines, as though planted. Fertilized by human compost – by the remains of thousands upon thousands of men, women and children – those lines marked common graves in a nation where as many as a million-and-a-half people, one fifth of the population, were 'missing'.

We made our approach into what had been the international airport at Phnom Penh. At the edge of the forest there appeared a pyramid of rusting cars like objects in a mirage. The pile included ambulances, a fire engine, police cars, refrigerators, washing machines, genera-

tors, television sets, telephones and typewriters. 'Here lies the modern age,' a headstone might have read, 'abandoned 17 April 1975, Year Zero.' From that date, anybody who had owned such 'luxuries', anybody who had lived in a city or town, anybody with more than a basic education or who had acquired a modern skill, anybody who knew or worked for foreigners, was in danger. Many would die.

Year Zero was the dawn of an age in which, *in extremis*, there would be no families, no sentiment, no expression of love or grief, no medicines, no hospitals, no schools, no books, no learning, no holidays, no music: only work and death. 'If people can build Angkor Wat,' said Pol Pot

CAMBODIA

KEYNOTE



CLAUDE SAUVAGEOT

Only work and death in Year Zero: refugees from a land that banned love, grief, hospitals, schools, books, holidays and music.

in 1977, 'they can do anything.' In that year he killed probably more of his people than at any time since he took power.

In my first hours in Phnom Penh I took no photographs; incredulity saw to that. I had no sense of people, of even the remnants of a population; the few human shapes I glimpsed seemed incoherent images, detached from the city itself. On catching sight of me, they would flit into the refuge of a courtyard or a cinema or a filling station. Only when I pursued several, and watched them forage, did I see that they were children. One child about ten years old – although age was difficult to judge – ran into a wardrobe lying on its side which was his or her shelter. In an abandoned Esso station an old woman and three emaciated children squatted around a pot containing a mixture of roots and leaves, which bubbled over a fire fuelled with paper money: thousands of snapping, crackling, brand-new bank notes lay in the gutters sluiced there by the afternoon rains, from the destroyed Bank of Cambodia.

During the coming weeks one sound remained in my consciousness day and night: the soft, almost lilting sound of

starving, sick children approaching death. In the eight months since the Vietnamese liberation, only three relief planes had come from the West. By the end of October, the tenth month, UNICEF and the Red Cross had sent 100 tons of relief; or as the Red Cross in Geneva preferred to call it, 'more than' 100 tons. In effect nothing. Few geopolitical games have been as cynical and bereft of civilized behaviour as that which isolated and punished the people of Cambodia. It is a game that still beckons a second holocaust in Asia.

A friend of the moon

One of my good friends is Chay Song Heng, who spent three and a half years as a prisoner of the Khmer Rouge. Heng pretended to be an idiot so that the guards would not suspect him of being educated and kill him. Confined to a rice-growing 'co-operative' and banned from speaking all but compliances, he imagined he was 'a friend of the moon'. He studied the lunar phases and kept a mental record of the hours, days, months and years. When liberation came on 25 December 1978 he said, 'can you imagine, I was only two days wrong!'

Heng is a translator and interpreter of English. His weekly government salary is enough to buy one can of Coca-Cola, so he takes classes in one of Phnom Penh's 'England language streets'. He is a diminutive man, who walks with a bounce, although I have now and then seen him tremble and his eyes reflect acute anxiety. 'In the Pol Pot years,' he said, 'I used to walk to the corner of the paddy in the evening. There I would practise my English. I would say to myself – well, mumble actually, in case I was overheard – "Good morning, Heng, and how are you this morning?" and I'd reply, "I'm quite well thank you, apart from the difficulty of living. I am a captive in my own country, and I am condemned for nothing. But they have neither my brain, nor my soul".'

Once I drove in Phnom Penh with Heng. Every bridge leading into the city had been destroyed by the Khmer Rouge, except one which is now the city's artery and its monument to Year Zero. 'On the morning of 17 April 1975,' said Heng, 'the Khmer Rouge came down our street, banging on the doors, ordering us to get out. The whole city was being evacuated,

pushed out. My mother, father and I got to the bridge at five o'clock, and it took us two hours to cross it with guns in our backs. During the night a woman gave birth to twins; when the guards told us to get up and move on, the new babies were left in the grass to die. The mother died later, I was told.'

Heng is one of the few people to have retained his real name. Most people have a number of aliases, or entirely new identities. Everybody remembers the moment when a list of names was read out by the Khmer Rouge. You waited for your name, and to hear it was to prepare for death. Heng was a government servant. Once, as we spoke, he had just heard the news that 50 people had been taken off two trains by the Khmer Rouge. A list was compiled on the spot and government servants were shot dead.

The sustaining of Pol Pot

The United Nations has played a pivotal role in Pol Pot's possible return. Although the Khmer Rouge government ceased to exist in January 1979, its representatives continued to occupy Cambodia's seat at the UN. Their right to do so was defended and promoted by the US as part of its new alliance with China – Pol Pot's principal underwriter and Vietnam's ancient foe – and as part of its cold war with the Soviet Union and its revenge on Vietnam. In 1981 President Carter's national security adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski, said, 'I encouraged the Chinese to support Pol Pot'. The US, he added, 'winked publicly' as China sent arms to the Khmer Rouge through Thailand.

As a cover for its secret war against Cambodia, Washington set up the Kampuchean Emergency Group, known as KEG, in Thailand. KEG's job was to 'mon-

itor' the distribution of Western humanitarian supplies sent to the refugee camps, including the Khmer Rouge. By the late 1980s KEG had become the Working Group, supplying battle plans and intelligence to a Cambodian 'resistance', headed by Prince Norodom Sihanouk and dominated by the Khmer Rouge. From 1983 Britain's SAS trained the 'resistance' forces in mine-laying and explosives.

When the Vietnamese withdrew unconditionally from Cambodia in 1989, the pressure was kept up. The US and China demanded that the Vietnamese-backed government in Phnom Penh share power with the Khmer Rouge coalition. Under pressure from the permanent five members of the UN Security Council, the coalition and the Hun Sen government signed 'peace accords' in Paris in November 1991. The Khmer Rouge was now legally back in Cambodia. The 'peace process' provided Pol Pot with a Trojan Horse back to power.

At their compound directly behind Prince Sihanouk's royal palace in Phnom Penh, the Khmer Rouge have the look of men who cannot believe their luck. 'So nice to see you again,' they declare to a respectful press corps. 'Yes, yes... everything is fine. Yes, of course, we shall consider your request for an interview...'

The unthinkable is being normalized in Cambodia. In an interview with the UN's Australian commander, Lieutenant General John Sanderson, I referred to the 'genocide' committed by the Khmer Rouge. 'Genocide is your term!' he came back. I reminded him that actually, no, it wasn't. In 1979 the UN Human Rights Commission described Pol Pot's crimes as 'the worst to have occurred anywhere in the world since Nazism': and, in 1985, the UN

Special Rapporteur on Genocide ruled that what the Khmer Rouge had done was 'genocide... even under the most restricted definition'. Still, the General would not utter such an 'inappropriate' word. He was, he said, 'committed to impartiality'.

Semantic games

For me, standing in the noonday heat outside the Khmer Rouge compound in Phnom Penh, all the disingenuous semantic games and the contortions of intellect and morality that have driven the campaign of recent years to make the Khmer Rouge respectable, and the 'peace process' appear to work, take on a vivid obscenity.

Today, in their air-conditioned offices and quarters that stand at the scene of their crime, the Khmer Rouge are courted. Among them is Khieu Samphan, Pol Pot's chief representative on the Supreme National Council (SNC), which the UN set up as Cambodia's interim authority until elections in May. The Khmer Rouge cannot be outvoted, and the SNC can do nothing without their agreement. Khieu Samphan was president of Pol Pot's terror state between 1976 and 1979, and contributed much of the 'theory' that led to the 'agrarian revolution' that wiped out a fifth of the population.

This is the price Cambodians must pay – runs the argument of the 'world community' – if 'free and fair' elections are to be held and a government in Phnom Penh made acceptable to the UN (in other words Washington and Beijing). A proportional voting system will almost certainly produce a coalition made up of the present Phnom Penh administration, together with FUNCINPEC, the acronym of the party led by Prince Rannariddh, Sihanouk's son, and the KPNLF led by Son Sann. The latter two were allied to the Khmer Rouge for ten years, and in some respects still are: they owe them numerous debts.

UN officials have been prevented from entering Khmer Rouge areas and registering people to vote. Those who have tried have found themselves staring into a B40 rocket launcher: others have been taken prisoner. At the Phnom Penh headquarters of the UN Transitional Authority (UNTAC), an air of almost obsessive unreality prevails. The Japanese diplomat in charge, Yasushi Akashi, regularly implores the Khmer Rouge to 'refrain' from preventing the UN getting on with the 'mission'. In return, Akashi is abused in racist language on Khmer Rouge radio.

Few of the UN bureaucracy seem to understand, or want to understand, the implications of a peace process that has allowed the Khmer Rouge to grow stronger by ignoring it, while their principal opponents, the Hun Sen government, have grown weaker by respecting it. Apart from

Ramshackle and precarious, life in Phnom Penh has yet to benefit from the peace process.



CLAUDE SAUVAGEOT

a few defectors, not a single Khmer Rouge soldier has come forward to lay down his weapons. In striking contrast, most of the 100,000-plus militia of the Hun Sen government has been wound up. While UN personnel are barred from moving more than 400 yards from Khmer Rouge military headquarters in Pailin, General Sanderson has confirmed that UN forces have 'prevented the Phnom Penh army from significantly building up the counter-offensive'.

Having invested itself with the sanctity of 'organizing democracy' in Cambodia, the UN bureaucracy has made clear that the elections will be held, regardless of the conditions under which people will vote or whether they will vote at all. Yet the prerequisite of any election – people's security – hardly exists in a country that has never had an election and is still at war. For example, there has been no serious attempt to begin clearing the minefields. One of the cruelest, and truest, jokes I heard was that 'people will vote with their legs'. The UN continues to deny development aid to Cambodia: a fraction of the \$880 million pledged at a UN conference in Tokyo last June has found its way into 'reconstruction'. The unstated reason is that this might strengthen the Phnom Penh government which, having lost its Soviet bloc support, cannot afford to pay its civil servants, teachers, nurses and soldiers.

At Tokyo, the Americans pledged \$60 million, of which about \$2 million has been spent building a strategic road and facilities across the Thai border into the KPNLF headquarters at Thmar Pouk. This contravenes the Paris accords, of which the US is a sponsor. The American road is now controlled by the Khmer Rouge, who operate road blocks at strategic junctions.

Déjà vu

The recolonization of Cambodia is well under way. The UN's American financial adviser, Roger Lawrence, has charge of the Central Bank of Cambodia and 'represents' Cambodia at meetings of the Washington-dominated World Bank and IMF. Thus, Cambodia is being eased into the world of 'structural adjustment programmes', which will ensure that it has a 'free market' and 'growth' economy favouring foreign market investors, such as the Thais, Singaporeans and, of course, Japanese, who are already 'investing' in the country with the finesse of pirates falling on buried treasure.

Since I was last here in 1990 the changes are quite astonishing. The 21,000 UN troops and officials, their vehicles, their villas and their camp followers give a sense of *déjà vu*. Is this the honky-tonk Phnom Penh of the early 1970s, just before the Khmer Rouge took power? A memo distributed to UN personnel says: 'Please try not to park your Landcruiser outside



A sponsored peace: a UN checkpoint in Cambodia announces the advent of a new world order.

brothels'. UN personnel have their own generators and clean water; but, without development aid, nothing can be done about the water supply, which is fed by the sewers and leaves tens of thousands of children dying from intestinal diseases. (Drugs are available, on the 'free market'.)

There is little work for people who cannot serve foreigners. Young men are blinded with flash burns from welding iron gates for UN villas. They lie on bamboo mats in agony with damp rags on their faces, until their next shift. At a diplomatic cocktail party in the Cambodiana Hotel, a 'luxurious' monstrosity beside the Mekong, the talk is, as ever, about the iniquities of corruption in Phnom Penh. No irony is noted.

During the 1980s, when the UN operated a blockade against Cambodia, a former senior Foreign Office official, John Pedler, met many of the world's foreign policy makers, as a representative of Britain's Cambodia Trust. He wrote to me: 'Specifically, I was told in Washington at the top career level that "the President will not accept the Hun Sen government", and "we are working for a messy sort of situation with a non-Hun Sen government, but without the Khmer Rouge who will continue to lurk in the jungles", in other words, for a state of affairs that will favour the destabilization of Hanoi.'

This is the 'better result' that Washington's ideologues have long sought in Indo-China. And if, following 'free and fair' elections, a pro-Washington, anti-Vietnam, IMF-sponsored, urban-dominated regime does not survive, and Pol Pot materializes, those responsible can at least say

they tried to bring peace to this 'impossible country'. 'The main thing,' says Gareth Evans, the Australian foreign affairs minister sometimes credited with dreaming up the UN plan, 'is to accentuate the positive... to keep our fingers crossed.'

What can be done? One solution, according to Cambodia specialist Raoul Jennar, is to give the UN a fresh mandate to isolate the Khmer Rouge. Jennar believes a new interim Cambodian authority, set up by the UN and presided over by Prince Sihanouk, should set about rehabilitating the country over a two-year period. Then a referendum would ask people what kind of regime they wanted and a constituent assembly would be elected.

My own view is that the UN, reborn of the 'new world order', has limited credibility, other than as a means of imposing the will of the great powers. However, if individual governments are serious about preventing another holocaust in Asia, as I believe a number are, they should be pressed to provide urgently the resources to rebuild Cambodia's infrastructure and its newly constituted national army.

What is most shameful is that a peaceful solution was entirely possible. All the 'great powers' had to do in 1979 was to ensure that the Khmer Rouge withered on the vine. Even now it would, I believe, take just one government's unilateral action to end the silence and bring others along. But the likelihood is that if the genocidists are to be brought to trial Cambodians will first have to resist them by force. When that happens, the rest of us should, for once, be on the right side. ■

VILLAGE VOICES

Pig earth

Children dodge mines and go hungry surrounded by lethal land where they must not venture.



CLAUDE SAUVAGEOT

THE village is 12 or 13 kilometres off Highway 5. You can see that it is in a less favoured position because the houses along the dirt track have become more and more makeshift, the children more ragged with parasite-bloated bellies and the rust-coloured hair of kwashiorkor – severe malnutrition. But there is laughter.

Rasme has his uncle's pig on a lead and is taking it for a walk. Six years old, he strides out like a man. The uncle hails me cheerily: 'Perhaps the Barang lady would like to take one Cambodian boy home to her country'. The swagger quickly drops away from Rasme. His lip trembles and he turns his head from me. 'No, no,' I say. 'Rasme belongs here.' The aunt calls from her hammock: 'Take Bora, he eats more rice'.

I am drawn into the laughing circle of adults and in the relaxed, inconsequential gossip I hear the talk of the day, talk of the market, talk of the children, talk of the pigs.

Most pigs are kept on a lead in Cambodia; the fence of a vegetable garden would need to be very strong to keep them out. Of course every single one is tied up here, in this poor village where a pig represents wealth. Since they eat food that people may otherwise eat, and since the people here are clearly malnourished, they are surely an imprudent investment. But a tempting gamble. To rear a pig and sell it could lift a family above bare subsistence level. So they try, though the odds are against them. With the ranks of Cambodian professionals still so thin, treatment for sick pigs is as inaccessible as is treatment for sick children.

The conversation intensifies as the woman swinging in the hammock becomes the focus. The aunt is a good storyteller. Her

face is mobile and her eyes flash as she relates yesterday's tragedy of the pigs. Someone had grown careless in tying them up. Two had strayed towards the minefield, unnoticed until just inside the edge of it. Of course each man, woman and child knows the danger of the minefield. The toddlers are held firmly on the hip of an older sister until they can understand. So nobody could enter the minefield to rescue the precious pigs. The aunt's arms flail out expressively. One explosion then another. A grown man or woman may have slowly bled to death or have been rescued only to be taken away for amputations. The pigs were small and died quickly.

I watch the face of Rasme's mother as her eyes follow her young son, who still strides back and forth with all the self-importance of a little boy trusted with a pig on a lead. The young mother's face is pensive. Without some asset which could be sold in an emergency a family with young children is totally vulnerable. Last week the small child of a neighbour came down with dengue fever. The family sold what they had to hire an oxcart from a wealthier village to take the child out to Highway 5 and so to a medical clinic. But the clinic charged for all that was needed and the family had no more assets.

The child died.

These are tenacious people. They have stayed steadfastly in their village while others fled into exile. Survivors. But the life which they staunchly safeguard can never be taken for granted. ■

Joan Healy

Joan Healy, of the Sisters of St Joseph of Australia, works in Cambodia as a consultant to the Overseas Service Bureau, Australia.

The Original Cambodian

Pol Pot, leader of the Khmer Rouge, achieved worldwide notoriety as the architect of the 'killing fields'. Ben Kiernan reveals the strange background of a political serial killer.

THE story began in a large, red-tiled, timber house on stilts overlooking a broad, brown river, downstream from a sleepy town named Kompong Thom. The river teemed with fish, its lush banks lined by coconut and mango trees. Ducks, chickens and pigs darted, pecked and rooted in the dust. Behind the houses along the bank stretched large rice fields. A small Chinese shop sold a few consumables.

It was the heat of the dry season in the Year of the Dragon: 19 May 1928. Pol Pot was born Saloth Sar, the youngest of a family of a girl and six boys. His parents owned nine hectares of riceland, three of garden-land and six buffalo. Old Saloth, with two sons and adopted nephews, harvested enough rice for about 20 people.

In later years the family would have been 'class enemies'. But few villagers thought so then. Rich or poor, everyone tilled the fields, fished the river, cooked tasty soups, raised children, propitiated

local spirits and French colonial officials or thronged Buddhist festivities in Kompong Thom's pagoda. In 1929 a French official described Kompong Thom people as 'the most deeply Cambodian and the least susceptible to our influence'.

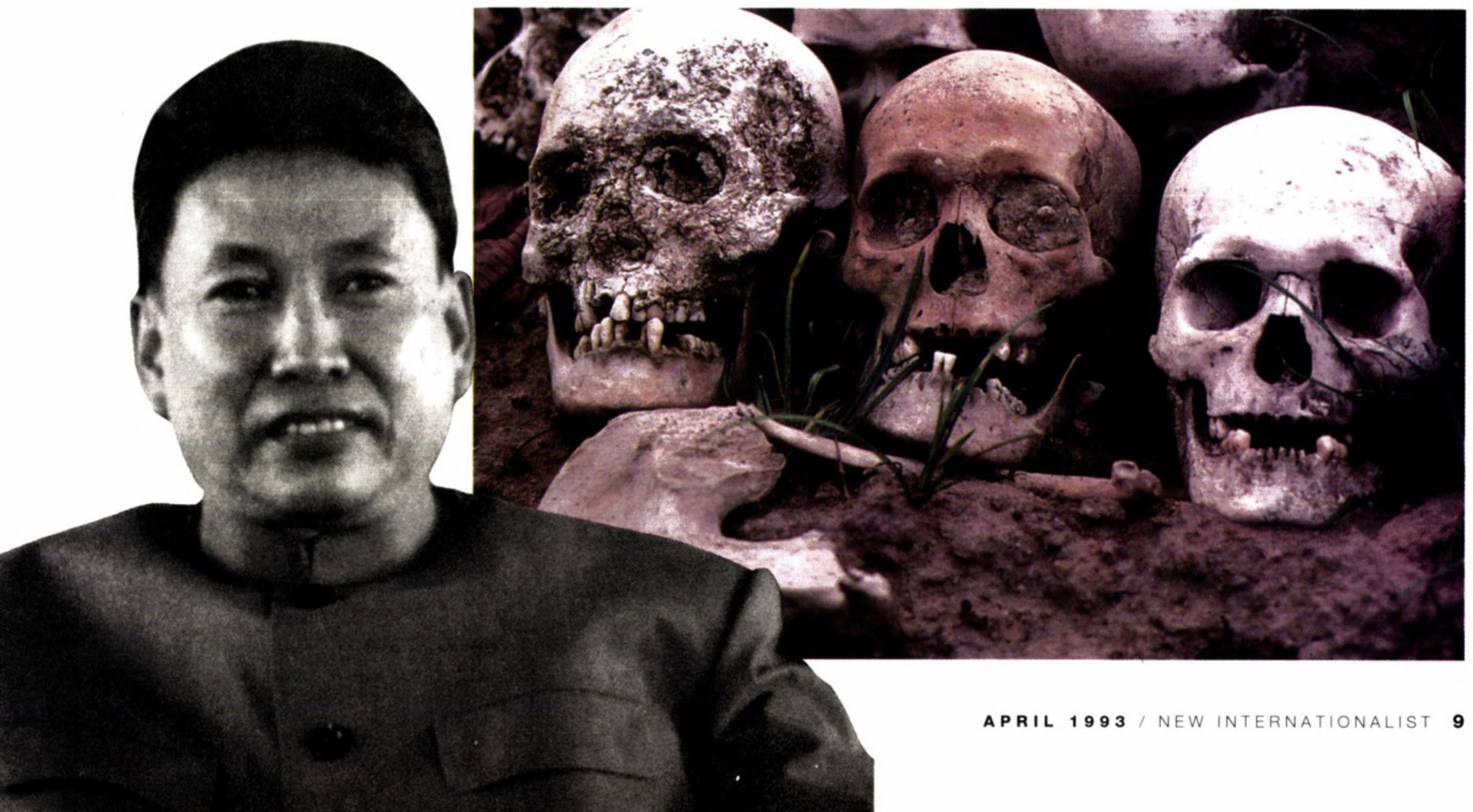
But the Saloth family were Khmer peasants with a difference. They had royal connections. Pol Pot's cousin had grown up a palace dancer, becoming one of King Monivong's principal wives. At 15 his eldest sister Sareung was chosen a consort. In 1928 the eldest brother, Loth Suong, began a career in palace protocol. Pol Pot joined him in 1934, aged six.

The country boy never worked a rice field or knew much of village life. A year in the royal monastery was followed by six in an elite Catholic school. His upbringing was strict. The girl next door, Saksi Spong, recalls that Suong 'was very serious and would not gamble or allow children to play near his home'. The palace compound was closeted and conservative, the old king a

French puppet. Outside, Phnom Penh's 100,000 inhabitants were mostly Chinese shopkeepers and Vietnamese workers. Few Cambodian childhoods were so removed from their vernacular culture.

At 14 Pol Pot went off to high school in a bustling Khmer market town. But he missed World War Two's tumultuous end in Phnom Penh. Youths forced his cousin, the new boy-king Norodom Sihanouk, briefly to declare independence from France, and Buddhist monks led Cambodian nationalists in common cause with Vietnamese communists. In 1948, back in the capital learning carpentry, Pol Pot's life changed. He received a scholarship to study radio-electricity in Paris.

He wrote Suong occasionally, asking for money. But one day a letter arrived asking for the official biography of Sihanouk. Suong sent back advice: Don't get involved in politics. But Pol Pot was already a revolutionary in the Cambodian section of the French Communist Party, then in its



Stalinist heyday. Those who knew him then insist that 'he would not have killed a chicken'; he was self-effacing, charming. He kept company with Khieu Ponnary, eight years his senior, the first Khmer woman to get the Baccalauréat. The couple chose Bastille Day for their wedding back home in 1956 – Suong was not invited and never saw his brother again.

Most of Pol Pot's Paris student friends, like Khieu Samphan, Ieng Sary and Son Sen, remain in his circle today. But Pol Pot stood out in the choice of a *nom de plume*: 'Original Cambodian'. Others preferred less racial, more modernist code-names like 'Free Khmer' or 'Khmer Worker'.

Pol Pot's scholarship ended after he failed his course three years in a row. His ship arrived home in January 1953, the day after King Sihanouk had declared martial law to suppress Cambodia's independence movement, which was becoming radicalized by French colonial repression. Pol Pot's closest brother, Saloth Chhay, joined the Cambodian and Vietnamese communists and took him along. They began teaching him how to 'work with the masses at the base, to build up the independence committees at the village level, member by member'. It seemed a patronizing slight, like his failure to rise quickly to the leadership despite his overseas experience. A former Cambodian comrade claims that Pol Pot 'said that everything should be done on the basis of self-reliance, independence and mastery. The Khmers should do everything on their own.'

In his view Cambodia did not need to learn or import anything from its neighbours. Rather, he would recover its pre-Buddhist glory by rebuilding the powerful economy of the medieval Angkor kingdom, and regain 'lost territory' from Vietnam and Thailand. Pol Pot treasured the Cambodian 'race', not individuals. National impurities included the foreign-educated (apart from his own group) and 'hereditary enemies', especially the Vietnamese.

After France withdrew from Cambodia in 1954 Pol Pot rose within the communist movement. In 1962 he became Party leader after his predecessor, a former Buddhist monk, was mysteriously killed. Pol Pot criticized rivals like Hou Yuon who supported Sihanouk's neutral foreign policy, thereby consolidating his position in the Party during eight years of guerilla warfare (1967-75), when he first used the code-name 'Pol'. The leadership of the Cambodian Communist Party, once rural, Buddhist, moderate and pro-Vietnamese, was now urban, French-educated, radical and anti-Vietnamese. Pol Pot had a thousand Vietnamese-trained Cambodian communists quietly murdered. By 1978 their fate had been shared by half the members



of the Party's Central Committee, which had rarely if ever met.

Although it was indigenous, Pol Pot's revolution would not have won power without the US economic and military destabilization of Cambodia, which began in 1966 after the American escalation in next-door Vietnam. Sihanouk's increasingly brutal repression drove the veterans of the country's independence struggle into dissidence, where the younger Paris-educated Party elite subjected them to its plan for a new rebellion. In 1969, embroiled in Vietnam, the US began a secret B-52 bombardment of Cambodia. A year later Sihanouk was overthrown by the US-backed Lon Nol. The Vietnam War spilled across and a new civil war tore Cambodia apart. The American assault on its countryside increased until 1973 when Congress imposed a halt: 540,000 tonnes of bombs had been dropped, half of them in the last six months. Up to 150,000 civilians had been killed.

Pol Pot's forces used the devastation as an excuse for their brutal, radical policies and purges. In May 1973 the CIA reported that communist recruiters were 'using damage caused by B-52 strikes as the main theme of their propaganda' and that their campaign had been 'effective'.

In his 1975 victory speech Pol Pot claimed 'clean victory... without any foreign connection'. The cities were evacuated amid continuing warfare, now against Vietnam. Rice was exported to China in exchange for weapons. The regime's rural bias had initial support from peasants, but they were rewarded with a life of unpaid collective labour. Dissident communists who favoured 'a system of plenty' were considered corrupted by 'a little prosperity', 'taken to pieces' by material things.

Pol Pot soon claimed to be 'four to ten

years ahead' of the other Asian communist states, adding: 'We have no model in building up our new society'. This glossed over the close links with China, which had supported Pol Pot ever since his visit to Beijing in 1964, when he met Deng Xiaoping. It disguised the influence of Maoism in the call for a 'Super Great Leap Forward', of Stalinism and even of the French Revolution, copied by redesigning Cambodia's working month into three ten-day weeks with one-day weekends.

A true national chauvinist, Pol Pot could not see Cambodia living in peace with its neighbours in a community of nations. 'When we are strong they are weak, when they are weak we are strong.' He shared the traditional Khmer elite's racism and grandiose designs on 'lost territories'. New raids on Vietnam, Thailand and Laos began simultaneously in 1977.

Imposing these policies led to a one-man dictatorship. In his administration Pol Pot was honorifically known as 'the Organization' – one which made speeches, watched movies and could be asked favours if one dared. Wedded to this, Khieu Ponnary reputedly went mad. They had no children.

One day in late 1978 Pol Pot's poster went up in a mess hall in Kompong Thom. Loth Suong gasped. So it was his own brother who had been running the country for four years! Terrified, Suong kept quiet. Their other brother Saloth Chhay had been murdered in 1975.

When Cambodian communists rebelled in the eastern zone in May 1978 Pol Pot's armies were unable to crush them quickly. On 10 May his radio broadcast a call not only to 'exterminate the 50 million Vietnamese' but also to 'purify the masses of the people' of Cambodia. Of 1.5 million easterners, branded as 'Khmer bodies with Vietnamese minds', at least 100,000 were exterminated in six months. In 1979 their surviving leaders, like current Prime Minister Hun Sen, succeeded Pol Pot after Hanoi drove his army into Thailand.

In a secret briefing to his commanders in 1988 Pol Pot blamed most of the killings on 'Vietnamese agents'. But he defended having massacred the defeated Lon Nol regime's officers, soldiers and officials. 'This stratum of the imperialists had to be totally destroyed,' he insisted. In 'abandoning communism' now, Pol Pot added, his movement discards its 'peel', but not the fruit inside. 'The politics has changed, but the spirit remains the same.' The Khmer Rouge predict their return with the slogan: 'When the water rises, the fish eat the ants, but when the water recedes, the ants eat the fish.'

Ben Kiernan is Associate Professor of South-East Asian History at Yale University and author of *How Pol Pot Came to Power* (Verso, 1985).

WANTED

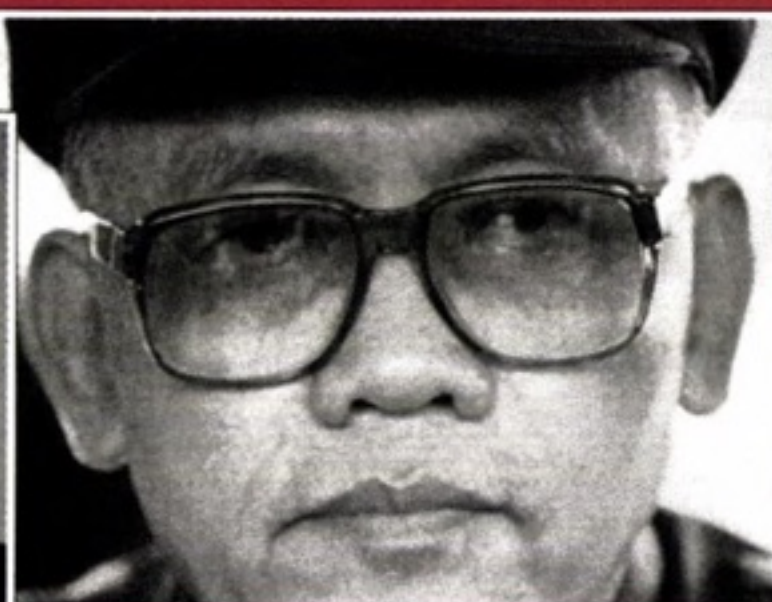
for mass murder, genocide and war crimes



POL POT: alias 'Brother No 1'; Secretary General of the Communist Party of Kampuchea, Prime Minister of the Khmer Rouge state of 'Democratic Kampuchea', 1976-1979; chiefly responsible for the deaths of at least 1.5 million Cambodians 1975-1979.



IENG SARY: alias 'Van'; Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister 1975-1979; Pol Pot's brother-in-law.



SON SEN: alias 'Khieu'; Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence, 1975-1979; Pol Pot's chief military strategist; Khmer Rouge delegate to 'Supreme National Council' under the UN Peace Accords.



KHIEU SAMPHAN: alias 'Hem'; President of the Khmer Rouge state, 1976-1979; front man for Pol Pot at the UN; Khmer Rouge delegate to 'Supreme National Council' under the UN Peace Accords.

Also **NUON CHEA**, alias 'Brother No 2', Deputy Secretary General of the Communist Party; **KE PAUK**, Undersecretary General of the Armed Forces; **MOK**, alias 'The Butcher of Kampuchea', Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces; **IENG THIRITH**, alias 'Phea', Minister of Social Affairs.

Anatomy of genocide

THE Pol Pot regime perpetrated genocide in Cambodia, causing the death of 1.5 million out of 8 million Cambodians in four years from 1975 to 1979. It breached the UN Genocide Convention in the persecution and slaughter of three categories of victims: ethnic or racial minorities, a part of the majority Khmer national group and religious groups like the 60,000 Buddhist monks.

The largest minority groups in Cambodia were the Vietnamese, the Chinese and the Muslim Chams. Most of the 450,000 ethnic **Vietnamese** community had been expelled by the US-backed Lon Nol regime in 1970, when bodies first floated down the Mekong. More were driven out by Pol Pot in 1975. The rest were murdered.

Cambodia's ethnic **Chinese** suffered the worst disaster ever to befall the Chinese Diaspora in South-East Asia. Of 425,000 only half survived. Systematic discrimination extended to bans on the Chinese language – like all foreign and minority languages – and on any distinguishable Chinese community.

The Muslim **Chams** numbered 250,000 in 1975. The Pol Pot army emptied all 113 Cham villages in Cambodia. 90,000 Chams were massacred and the survivors dispersed. Islamic schools and religion, and the Cham language, were banned. Of the 113 Cham leaders only 21 survived in 1979 and only 25 of their 226 deputies.

Of the majority **Khmers**, 15 per cent of the rural population had perished by 1979 and 25 per cent of the urban. The most horrific slaughter was in the last six months of Khmer Rouge rule, in the purge of the politically suspect Eastern Zone, bordering Vietnam. My own interviews with 90 survivors

suggest a toll of at least 100,000 killed, probably many more.

Of a total of 2,680 Buddhist monks from just eight of Cambodia's 3,000 monasteries only 70 monks were found by a detailed study to have survived in 1979. A 1975 Pol Pot document boasted: 'Monasteries... are largely abandoned. The foundation pillars of Buddhism... have disintegrated [and] will dissolve further. The political base, the economic base, the cultural base must be uprooted.' This is evidence of genocidal intent. Buddhism was completely suppressed from 1975 to 1979. And only last July Khmer Rouge guerrillas mortared a Cambodian Buddhist monastery in Siemreap province, killing one monk, injuring three others and destroying the temple.

The UN itself equivocates on the genocide issue. In November 1992 the UN's Special Representative in Cambodia, Yasushi Akashi, actually twisted on a double euphemism, describing 'the policies and practices of the past' as 'a euphemism for the gross human rights violations which Cambodia has experienced in recent decades'. There was no specific reference to the Khmer Rouge.

Legal action in the World Court under the Genocide Convention has always faced Chinese and US opposition. But the US and Australia now say they are prepared to support a court case in Cambodia to bring the Khmer Rouge to justice for their crimes. Britain has yet to state a view. ■

Ben Kiernan

The Campaign to Oppose the Return of the Khmer Rouge (CORKR) welcomes donations. See Action page overleaf for more details.

No return to Year Zero

Throughout these terrible years for the Cambodian people, practical initiatives of support and solidarity have continued around the world. The next few months are critical for the future of Cambodia. Here the NI suggests what you can do to help.

Practical assistance:

The US-led embargo on development assistance for Cambodia following the Vietnamese invasion and the overthrow of Pol Pot in 1979 made it difficult for humanitarian groups – and particularly UN agencies – to come to the aid of the Cambodian people when they needed it most. Those who braved official displeasure were taking considerable risks. Here is a list of the main aid agencies that ignored the international authorities, have had ties with Cambodia since 1979 and remain helping Cambodia today:

Co-ordinating groups:

Trocaire, 169 Booterstown Avenue, Dublin, Ireland, acting as co-ordinator for *Co-operation Internationale Pour le Developpement et la Solidarite* (CIDSE), 1-2 Avenue des Aris, Bie 6 1040, Brussels, Belgium. This is an international working group of 13 national Catholic development agencies also supported by *Christian Aid* (UK) and *Catholic Commission for Justice, Peace and Development* (Aotearoa / New Zealand).

Partnership for Development in Kampuchea, c/o NOVIB, Amaliastraat 7, 2514 JC, The Hague, Netherlands; a consortium that emerged from the Oxfam-led group between 1979 and 1982 and includes *Fund for Development* (Belgium), *NOVIB* (Netherlands), *Oxfam America*, *Oxfam Belgium* and *Oxfam Hong Kong*.

Aotearoa / New Zealand

Catholic Commission for Justice, Peace and Development, PO Box 12193, Wellington.
Christian World Service, PO Box 22-652, Christchurch.
Corso, PO Box 1905, Christchurch.

Australia

Australian-Cambodian Support Committee, PO Box 3, Trades Hall, 4 Goulburn Street, Sydney, NSW 2000.
Australian Catholic Relief, 19 Mackenzie Street, North Sydney, NSW 2060.
Overseas Service Bureau, PO Box 350, Fitzroy, Victoria, 3065.

Canada

Cambodia Canada Development Program (CCDP), 180 Ste-Catherine est, 620, Montreal, PQ, H2X 1K9.
Mennonite Central Committee, Suite 803, 63 Sparks Street, Ottawa K1P 5A6.

United Kingdom

Oxfam UK and Ireland, 274 Banbury Road, Oxford OX2 7DZ.
Christian Aid, PO Box 100, London SE1 7RT [Secretariat of the International NGO Forum on Cambodia].

United States

American Friends Service Committee, 1501 Cherry Street, Philadelphia, PA 19102.

Church World Service, 475 Riverside Drive, New York, NY 10115-0050.

Mennonite Central Committee, Box M, 21 South 12th Street, Akron, PA 17501.

Others

HEKS, Stampfembachstrasse 123, CH-8006, Zurich, Switzerland.

Lutheran World Service, Department for World Service, PO Box 2100, 1211 Geneva 2, Switzerland.

Redd Barna – Cambodia, Grensesvingen 7, P Boks 6200 Etterstad, N-0602, Oslo 6, Norway.

Swedish Red Cross, Osthannarsgaten 70, Box 27316, S-10254, Stockholm, Sweden.

World Council of Churches, PO Box 66, 1211 Geneva, Switzerland.

Campaigning

Groups around the world are co-ordinating mass lobbies of political leaders on 28 April 1993. To help, contact:

Action Cambodia, 75 Highbury Hill, London N5 11SX.

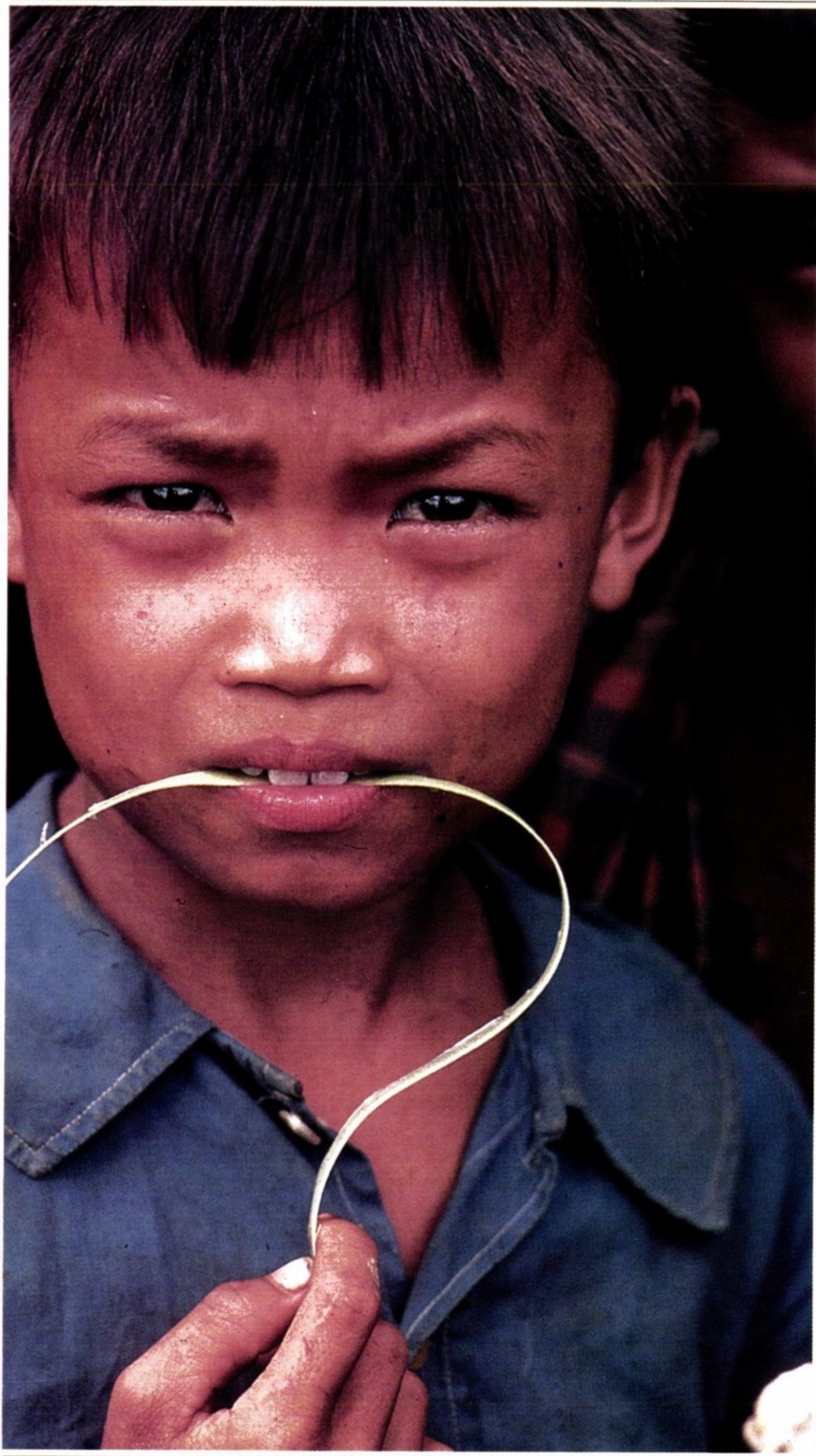
The Campaign to Oppose the Return of the Khmer Rouge (CORKR), 318 4th Street NE, Washington, DC 20002, USA: a coalition of 46 humanitarian relief, public policy and peace organizations.

Cambodia Solidarity Groups, c/o CONHLAMM, 55, Grand Parade, Cork, Ireland; grassroots organization to promote self-determination and oppose the return of the Khmer Rouge.

Top photograph: Anxiety for the future in the eyes of the young. Middle: The Red Cross distributes aid to refugees.

Bottom: The UN 'celebrating' the first anniversary of the peace accords in Phnom Penh, 23 November 1992. Cambodians were not permitted to join in.





Also worth reading on Cambodia...

You'll find more of **John Pilger's** writing on Cambodia in his two collections, *Heroes* (Pan Books 1989) and *Distant Voices* (Vintage, 1992). The best authority on Cambodia is **Ben Kiernan**, whose works include *How Pol Pot Came to Power* (Verso, 1985); historical background is in his *Peasants and Politics in Kampuchea 1942 to 1981* with **Chantou Boua** (Zed Press, 1982). If you'd like to keep up to date with the Cambodia story you can subscribe to **Raoul Jennar's** *Cambodian Chronicles*, published by CEREO, BP 44, B1370, Jodoigne, Belgium. More details on the refugee situation from **Josephine Reynell**, *Political Pawns: Refugees on the Thai-Kampuchean Border* (Queen Elizabeth House Refugee Studies Programme, Oxford 1989). If you're in any doubt about the Khmer Rouge genocide, read **Kimmo Kiljunen** (ed), *Kampuchea: Decade of Genocide: a Finnish Inquiry Commission Report* (Zed Press, 1984).

Letter writing:

When John Pilger and David Munro's documentary *Cambodia - Year Ten* was screened on UK network TV in 1989 some 13,000 letters were received by the British Foreign Office questioning the UK Government's role in Cambodia. The NI is helping to generate a worldwide campaign of support and solidarity for the Cambodian people which will prevent the return of the Khmer Rouge. We are asking readers to write letters to Parliamentary or Congressional representatives expressing concern. You might like to ask them to act on the following points:

- To secure the release of the full \$880 million development aid promised to Cambodia by the UN at last year's Tokyo Conference. Particular attention should be drawn to the moral duty of the international community to assist directly in the removal of mines. A separate and substantial budget and allocation of personnel should be provided for this.
- To press the International Court of Justice to establish a special commission to prosecute Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge leadership. And to press the UN Security Council to sanction a Cambodia war crimes tribunal - exactly as they have done with Yugoslavia.
- To urge the UN to retain a presence on an indefinite basis and in agreement with the duly elected government. In particular there should be a strengthened human-rights component and a Special Rapporteur resident in the country reporting directly to the UN General Assembly. The terms of reference of the Rapporteur should include past (genocidal) human-rights abuses as well as present ones.
- To give support (*excluding* personnel) and equipment to a newly constituted Cambodian National Army to resist any take-over by the Khmer Rouge.

Please write your letters, marked 'Cambodia' and with your name and address on the outside of the envelope, to your parliamentary or congressional representative, care of the following offices:

Aotearoa / New Zealand NI PO Box 1905, Christchurch.

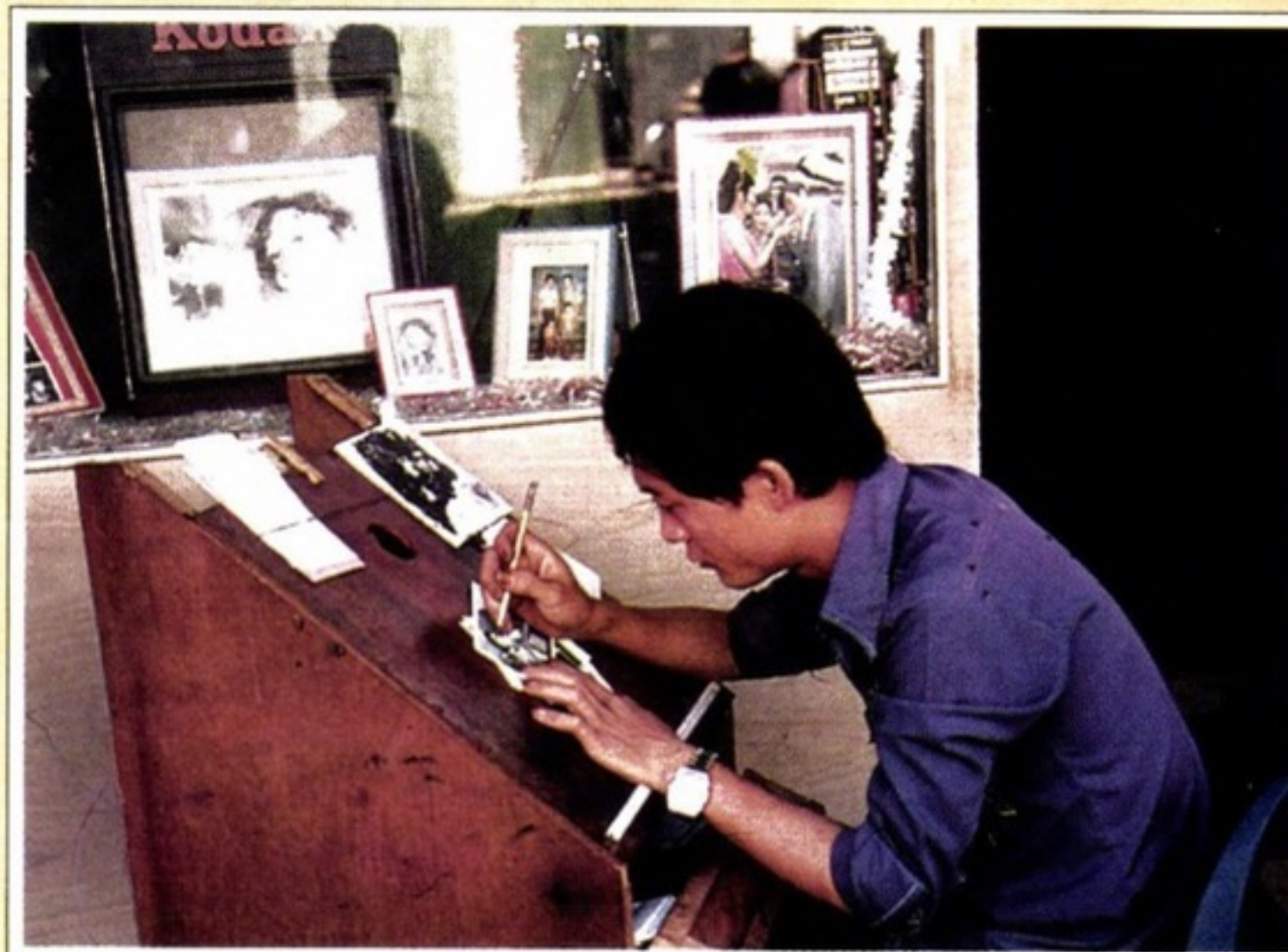
Australia
NI, 7 Hutt St, Adelaide, 5000.

Canada
NI, 1011 Bloor Street West, Toronto, Ontario M6H 1M1.

UK
NI, PO Box 419, Oxford OX4 1BF.

US
The Campaign to Oppose the Return of the Khmer Rouge (CORKR), 318 4th Street, NE, Washington, DC 20002.

Ireland
Cambodia Solidarity, c/o CONHLAMM, 55 Grand Parade, Cork, Ireland.



PHOTOGRAPHS TOP: CLAUDE SAUVAGEOT; MIDDLE: NIC DUNLOP; BOTTOM RIGHT: CLAUDE SAUVAGEOT.

Opportunity knocks

*Cambodians are getting a crash course in the new, freewheeling world economic order. **Paul Donovan** explains why the solutions to Cambodia's burgeoning environmental and economic crisis are often worse than the problem.*



New money, same old story: the Hotel Cambodian (above) caters for the smart money, while in the markets (right) the food may be there, but few can afford to buy it.

I AM not an environmentalist, nor an economist. I'm just an opportunist,' says a timber trader on the border with Vietnam. He was neatly summarizing what's happening to Cambodia's stricken economy and environment.

The country was once covered with dense forests, but in less than 30 years almost half of them have gone – in 1992 alone over one million hectares of forest were cut. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) estimates logging levels to be two-and-a-half to five times above the country's sustainable yield. At this rate Cambodia will have lost what remains of its natural forest cover in less than ten years. Over 40 per cent of what was once farmland is now a wasteland covered with mines, and land is urgently needed for 360,000 refugees

returning from the border camps.

The pressure for quick profits from timber is intense. All four Cambodian factions have raised funds via logging. The Khmer Rouge receive one million dollars per month from timber exported across the Thai border from the forests they control in the west of the country around Palin. The State of Cambodia Government (SOC) earns 80 per cent of its foreign exchange from logging activities. The SOC has signed concessions with companies from Thailand, France and Singapore and has contracts pending with Malaysian and Indonesian parties.

On 31 December 1992 a logging moratorium came into effect. Although this ban may reduce the export of raw logs, early indications suggest an increase in internal

sawmill production. The Japanese have sawmills in Kompong Speu and just outside Phnom Penh. Much of the sawn timber on the road to Khompong Som is stamped for delivery to Japan. Internal demand for timber has also grown with the UN presence and the consequent construction boom.

In the south-western province of Koh Kong villagers are now using portable sawmills and netting up to \$800 per month selling to Thai and Singaporean buyers who have ships anchored off-shore. Truck driver Seng Phon – formerly a government soldier – supports his family by transporting logs from Koh Kong to Kandal province. 'I stopped being a soldier because I didn't have enough food to eat,' says Phon, who makes two runs per week netting \$640 for each truckload of 12 logs.

CAMBODIA

ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMY



'Cambodia can never return to the way it was,' says Gordon Patterson of the Mennonite Committee, one of the aid agencies most involved in forestry projects. 'Each period of deforestation over the last several decades – Pol Pot, the reconstruction after Pol Pot or the latest period of cutting – contributes to the degradation of Cambodia's natural resources and that is irreversible.'

Gem mining around Palin in the Khmer

sold in the areas they control. Some mechanical panning has been reported in Cambodia with the residue earth being washed away into the Tonle Sap River, where it adds to the siltation process.

Oil prospecting is also damaging the environment. Sonic booms threaten fish production. Drilling threatens to dump contaminated mud in internal waterways. Road building to provide access for seismic surveys is another potential cause of damage to ecosystems.

The Khmer Rouge are unrepentant. 'After the peace agreement was signed in Paris our Chinese friends stopped all assistance,' says Ieng Sary, a Khmer Rouge leader, 'so we have to sell some trees to the Thais to meet the immediate needs of the people.'

It is one of the more dreadful ironies of Cambodia that the best deterrent to further deforestation is the presence of land mines: the same weapons that stop the people growing sufficient crops to feed themselves and drive them to seek alternative sources of income. This is one of the many ways in which the destruction of the Cambodian environment is directly linked to the impoverishment of its people. There is as yet precious little sign that the multilateral agencies working through UNTAC have taken the environment on board as a priority or related it coherently to the urgent material needs of the Cambodian people.

For 12 years the country was subjected to a US-led trade embargo and was the only Third World country denied UN development aid.

From 1986 the SOC began a transition from the old-style 'command' economy to a more liberal market model. But the Cambodian economy was knocked sideways by two serious setbacks. First Soviet aid and subsidies amounting to \$100 million a year were removed. Then the withdrawal of Vietnamese troops in 1989 forced the SOC to spend more on arms to



The wider environmental costs of deforestation are rising sharply. Waterways are beginning to clog up. Fish are reportedly dying from the effects of siltation in the Tonle Sap river. Fisherfolk already avoid the most heavily muddied areas of the lake: the cumulative effect has been to reduce the spawning ground available for migratory fish. In August 1991 a flash flood in the Mekong waterway caused an estimated \$150 million of damage to farms and fisheries. 'The flood did more damage in 24 hours than the value of all the timber that had been extracted,' says UNDP's John Dennis.

Rouge-controlled zone has created what soldiers from the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) describe as a 'lunar landscape'. Trucks are operating 24 hours a day removing earth across the Thai border where it is panned and the valuable gemstones removed. The Khmer Rouge charge a 45-per-cent tax on all gems removed and

FAR LEFT: NIC DUNLOP/SELECT; LEFT: CLAUDE SAUVAGEOT



PAUL DONOVAN

Marked for Osaka, Japan, sawn timber avoids restrictions on the export of logs.

defend itself against the three opposing foreign-backed factions. Defence came to absorb half the government budget. Faced with a growing deficit and rampant inflation the government turned to printing money and selling off the country's assets.

The result is an almost complete lack of regulation. While examining industrial enterprises in Cambodia UNDP found that out of 46 enterprises surveyed in Phnom Penh 76 per cent had either been sold outright or were in the process of being leased out for 20-year periods to foreign investors. There were no provisions for joint ventures, no competitive bidding in most instances, no requirement for development plans and no environmental-protection regulations.

The UN, for its part, bowed to Khmer Rouge insistence that the SOC should receive no direct financial support. So, as inflation and the deficit grow, the SOC gets blamed for worsening conditions of poverty. Roger Lawrence, the UN Economic Adviser and Cambodia's representative at both the IMF and World Bank, proposes an all-too-familiar exercise in cost-cutting and increased revenue collection. In October Prime Minister Hun Sen said he could not cut government salaries because they were only enough to buy the equivalent of two cartons of cigarettes a month.

UNTAC nonetheless moved to control the money supply and stop the inflow of freshly printed bank notes from Russia. The value of the Cambodian *riel* fell from

550 to the US dollar in December 1991 to 2,280 in September 1992. The effect has been to take basic foodstuffs beyond the reach of the majority of Cambodians.

Public employees and soldiers have been hit particularly hard by inflation because of their fixed local-currency salaries. There has been increasing absenteeism and corruption among government employees. A sliding scale of corruption ranges from the sale of typewriters and office equipment at the lower levels to large-scale real-estate deals in the higher echelons.

Roger Lawrence denies any direct link between the exchange rate, inflation and the UN presence, claiming there is merely what he terms a 'dollarization of the economy'. UN personnel pay their bills directly in dollars from their \$140-a-day allowance. A whole new stratum of service industries has grown around the UN operation, including restaurants and hotels which are usually built, equipped, operated and staffed by foreigners.

The UN has in effect occupied the country, setting up separate structures rather than seeking integration with what already existed. 'It is the same as under the Khmer Rouge, but there was not so much difference then between rich and poor,' says Mao Sotha, who worked at a government-owned factory before it was shut down earlier this year.

During the years of the US-led economic embargo UNDP held \$80 million of

aid, unable to utilize the funds. In June 1992 the Secretary General of the UN requested \$595 million for the rehabilitation phase of the UN programme to maintain essential services, including food security, agriculture, health, water, sanitation, education and training. The appeal highlighted the need for \$111 million in public-sector financing, without which it predicted 'the disintegration of the entire civil service'.

To date little of the \$880 million pledged by donors has been forthcoming. One senior official confirmed that donors are waiting for the elections before finally committing the funds. Both the US and Japan have invested only in areas likely to prove profitable in the future: the rehabilitation and reconstruction component of the UN programme has been totally neglected. Voluntary agencies have had to play a major part in resourcing essential services such as health, education and social welfare. Any chance of a 'peace dividend' from the demobilization and disarmament of the four factions disappeared last June, when the Khmer Rouge refused to comply with the Paris Accords on demobilization and disarmament.

Roger Lawrence is keen to bring Cambodia firmly into the orbit of the IMF and World Bank. In September 1992 he attended their annual meeting on behalf of Cambodia. By the end of the year, once Cambodia's \$67 million arrears in payments had been underwritten, a senior UN source was able to boast there would be 'full resumption of IMF operations in Cambodia by early 1993'.

Cambodia desperately needs financial help if it is to rebuild. Western donors argue that Cambodia lacks the infrastructure to absorb large amounts of aid. But there is no reason under the Paris Agreement why funds for rehabilitation could not be used to reduce the government deficit; at least then something of the civil-government structure could be salvaged and public employees could begin to contemplate raising more money through taxation. But the monetarist approach adopted by the UN – non-intervention and making cuts where possible – has simply worsened an already dire economic situation.

For Cambodia the future must lie in the painful reconstruction of an essentially agrarian economy. It would be a poor reflection on the UN operation if its legacy to Cambodia were little more than an environmental and economic 'basket case' suitable for treatment only by World Bank and IMF 'structural adjustment' programmes. ■

Freelance journalist **Paul Donovan** recently returned from Cambodia. He is the co-ordinator of the Cambodia Forum of worldwide non-governmental agencies.

VILLAGE VOICES

Bitter sweet reunion

The old man is a survivor with a family savaged by conflict but happy to be together again.



CLAUDE SAUVAGEOT

THE old man squats down on his heels in a classic Cambodian gesture. He is clearly at ease and relaxed. Behind him in the bamboo and blue-plastic hut the generations of his family attend efficiently to the everyday chores of life: the deft gesture to calm a baby, to secure a sarong, to lower a loaded shoulder pole carefully to the ground. This is Phnow Ta P'dai, a squatter village close to a mountain thickly sown with land mines. We are about an hour's car drive from Battambang city. It is late in 1992 and the refugees have poured back into this dangerous wasteland from all along the Thai border. The old man nods a greeting.

I squat beside him asking the usual question: 'How are you?' 'Khnhoim sahbay jeut...' 'My heart is happy,' he answers. He wears only a faded *kraomah*, his face is lined and scarred, teeth are missing. He sits in an aura of patient waiting, as if waiting were the main occupation of his life. 'What makes you happy?' I ask. And the story pours out – the return of all his grown children from their places of exile and shelter during the fighting.

This daughter has been a refugee in Site 2 on the Thai-Cambodia border. She has a husband now and three children. This son was pressed into service as a porter for the Khmer Rouge and finished up in Site 8, known as the Khmer Rouge refugee camp. He did not wait for his official repatriation, he has come home. The other girl went only as far as an encampment for the displaced on the other side of Battambang, 60 kilometres away. She was the second wife of her husband and now he has moved on to his third, so she returns with only the children. The years of fighting have left women a large majority in this land and many now head households alone.

The grandfather's face beams with pride as he surveys his returned children and new-found grandchildren, but darkens like a sudden storm as he recalls the death of his first child in an American bombing raid and of his youngest who died in the jungle fighting for the right-wing resistance. The suffering of his wife and two children at the time of their death in the Pol Pot era is too terrible to recall in detail. At least the others died quickly.

The celebration of the return is clouded momentarily with the darkness of the unmourned dead. But he is a survivor. He shifts his position on his heels and calls his daughters to meet me.

Pretty girls with large dark eyes and brown curling hair, they *wai* (palms joined, head bowed) to me respectfully as they come to squat beside us. The youngest, the deserted one, carries a baby to her breast. We talk of life in the squatter village. A few months ago there was nobody here. Now there is a population of several hundred and still more to come. They do so against the advice of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). They know that it is thought too dangerous because of the land mines and that one returnee, a young medic, has already lost a leg nearby. But if not here, where else would they go? Their land was here.

The grandfather nods to the nearby lethal mountain. He was born there. The girls were born there too. Their rice field is perhaps 70 metres away but must remain inaccessible.

I ask about other problems. They insist that if only the land mines could be cleared everything would be all right. They admit that there is no safe water, no chance at all of medical services for poor people such as themselves, no means of earning a livelihood that they can imagine, no certainty of where the food will come from when the UNHCR rice ration ceases 400 days after their return. But they remind themselves and me of the joy of their reunion. Truly they are *sahbhay jeut*, happy of heart.

I have asked so many questions. Now it is Grandfather's turn. 'Ayoop ponman?' It is perfectly polite to inquire the age of a stranger in this land where age is honoured. I am asked so often that this is the question I answer fluently: 'I am 57 years old'. The old man is delighted. My age is the same as his.

Two lives. I had never thought of 57 years as old. But this man's 57 years has been a living of joy and sorrow, of terror and survival, of optimism and courage enough for a century. He beams at his reunited family with joy and pride. A singularly difficult life but the triumph of a family who remain 'of one heart'... *jeut tai moi*.

Joan Healy

A shattered nation

The Khmer Rouge tried to restart history, to erase all trace of what went before. Even the ruins are not there to build on. Reconstruction has been a hard struggle and there's a long way still to go before the benefits of peace reach ordinary Cambodians.



CAMBODIA

Areas occupied by the Khmer Rouge

Education

By the end of the Khmer Rouge revolution in 1979 all educational books, equipment and facilities had been destroyed and over three quarters of the 20,000 teachers had either died or left the country. A massive effort has been made to re-establish a basic education system and there are now:^{1,3,7}

- 55,000 school teachers with 16,000 more expected in the next two years
- About 90 per cent of school-age children in school
- An adult-literacy rate of between 60 and 70 per cent
- 40 per cent of children completing five years' education



● 180,000 internally displaced people inside Cambodia, 20 per cent of whom had been displaced for more than 20 months

A programme of repatriation ahead of the May 1993 elections began to fall well behind schedule, and in May 1992 returnees were offered a cash payment of \$50 as an alternative to land.

Population

The slaughter by the Khmer Rouge of an estimated 1.5 million people out of a total of less than eight million distorted the Cambodian population and caused deep personal and social traumas.^{1,4}

- Females make up 64 per cent of the adult population
- There are 200,000 orphaned children
- 50 per cent of the population is aged under 15
- Rapid growth may quadruple the population in the next 50 years



Health

Cambodians are suffering terribly from preventable disease and the consequences of conflict.^{1,5,6}

- Life expectancy is 49.7 years (compared with 66 in Thailand and 67 in Vietnam)
- The infant mortality rate is 120 per 1,000 live births (Asia average 83 per 1,000)
- Only 12 per cent of the population in rural areas and 21 per cent in urban areas have access to safe drinking water

Refugees and displaced people

For a generation hundreds of thousands of Cambodians had to leave their homes and seek refuge where they could. Restoring peace to Cambodia means finding and securing homes for them - a daunting task for the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) and the international relief agencies. In May 1992 the UN Secretary General reported that there were:¹

- 360,000 people to be returned from the Thai border camps, of whom 90 per cent were aged under 45 and almost half aged under 15

Land mines

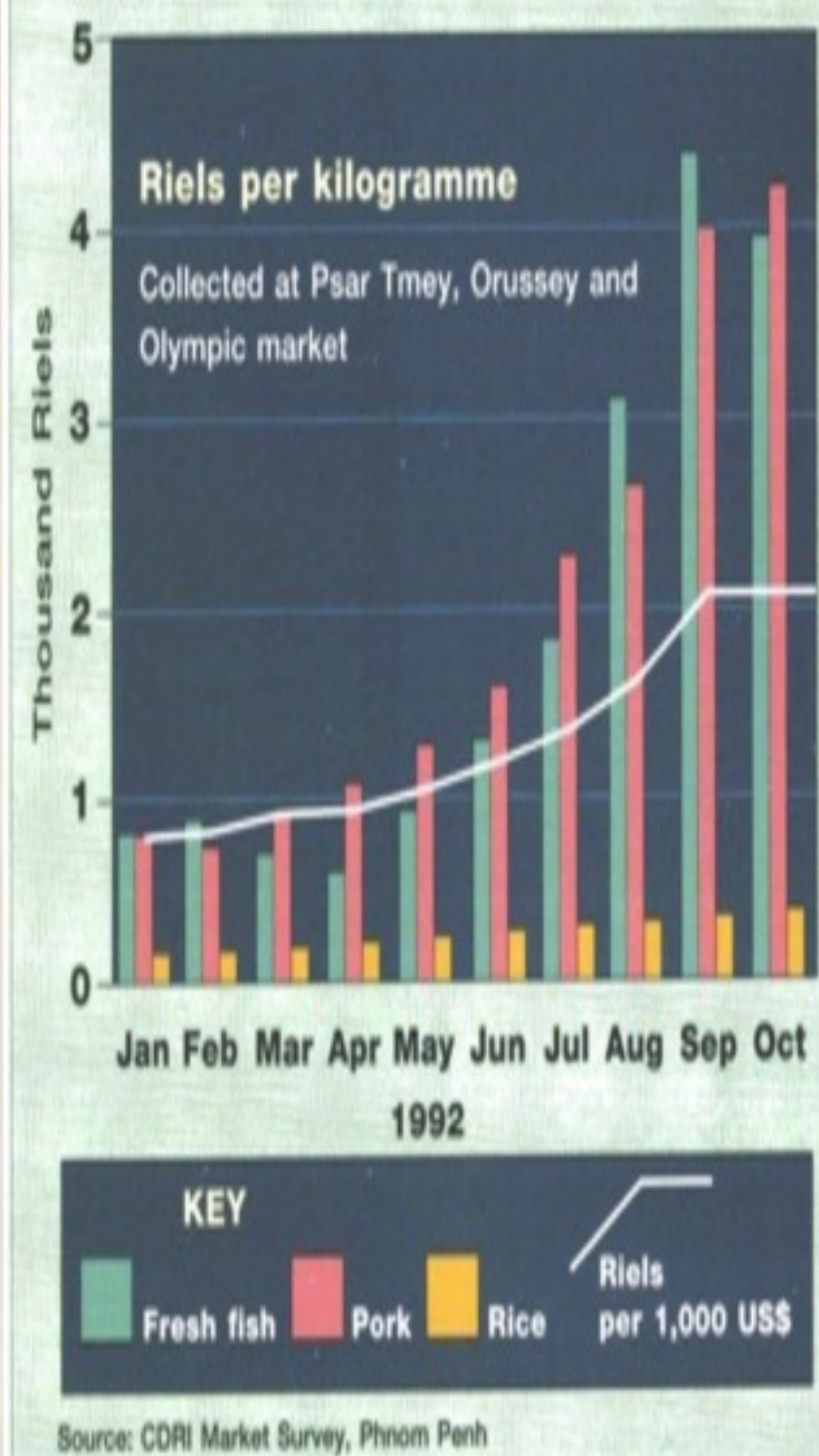
All sides in the Cambodian conflict have used low-cost 'antipersonnel' devices as a means of denying territory to their opponents. The result is a country infested with land mines that have to be cleared before people can return safely to their homes and Cambodia's agricultural economy can begin to recover. They have taken a terrible toll of mutilation on the Cambodian people:^{1,2}

- There is a minimum of 4 million land mines in Cambodia
- 1 in 236 Cambodians is disabled, making Cambodia the most disabled country on earth
- Each month there are between 300 and 700 amputations due to land-mine injuries
- As of September 1992, 844 Cambodians from the four factions had graduated from 26 courses run by the UN Mine Clearance Training Units. 41 Khmer Rouge graduated from 2 courses taught by the UK contingent in Cambodia.

The cost of living

When the Khmer Rouge tried to return Cambodia to 'year zero' they meant the pre-industrial age, emptying the cities and destroying the fragile economy. Agriculture accounts for 47 per cent of production and employs 84 per cent of the population. By the usual measure of 'Gross Domestic Product' (GDP), which is estimated at \$150 per capita per year, Cambodia is now among the three poorest countries in the world. With the 'liberalization' of the economy the Cambodian currency (the riel) halved in value in 1992 and hyper-inflation took over, raising the price of basic foodstuffs beyond the reach of many ordinary Cambodians.^{1,4}

Food prices



'Hardship singles out your true friend.'

Khmer proverb.

The United Nations

The United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) was established in February 1992 for a maximum period of 18 months to implement an Agreement reached between the opposing Cambodian forces in Paris in October 1991. The Supreme National Council, made up of the four Cambodian factions, has delegated 'all powers necessary' to UNTAC, which comprises:^{1,3}

- Some 20,000 military and civilian personnel operating in distinct zones
- 3,039 civilian police from 31 countries, the largest contingents from India (321), Bangladesh (225) and Indonesia (204)
- 15,730 troops from 31 countries, the largest contingents from Indonesia (1,752), India (1,387) and Pakistan (1,160), and including Aotearoa/New Zealand (99), Australia (499), Canada (230), the UK (120) and the US (50)

The cost of the UN operation is \$2 billion



¹ The Secretary General's Consolidated Appeal for Cambodia's Immediate Needs and National Rehabilitation, United Nations, May 1992. ² Land Mines in Cambodia: the Cowards' War, Asia Watch / Physicians for Human Rights, September 1991. ³ UNTAC Spokesman's Office, September 1992. ⁴ UNTAC information. ⁵ Cambodia: Agenda for Rehabilitation and Reconstruction, World Bank, June 1992. ⁶ Raoul Jennar, Cambodian Chronicles VI, November 1992. ⁷ Environmental Priorities and Strategies for Strengthening Capacity for Sustainable Development in Cambodia, UNDP, April 1992. ⁸ The Economist, 6 February 1993.

Cotton wool and diamonds



*Conflict has made Cambodian women the majority of the population but left their status unchanged. **Chanthou Boua** describes the heavy burden of survival that has fallen upon them.*

CLAUDE SAUVAGEOT

A CAMBODIAN girl used to be compared to a piece of cotton wool and a boy to a diamond. A diamond, when dropped into mud, can be washed as clean and sparkling as before, while cotton wool can never regain its purity once it has been dirtied. The 'mud', to a traditional Cambodian, could be simply the act of falling in love. Cambodian parents usually advise a son against marrying a girl who falls in love with him before the wedding night, because girls who might engage in premarital sex are considered beyond redemption.

The discrimination against women in Cambodian culture became even more difficult for those women who emerged from the horrors of 'Pol Pot time', which killed more than a million Cambodians by starvation or execution. Because women survived the starvation better than men they are now a disproportionate majority of the labour force. Women were also sometimes spared the political slaying because they were

considered less threatening to the regime than their husbands, fathers, sons and brothers. In villages and districts of Cambodia today, up to 65 per cent of the population – and 70 per cent of the able-bodied population – are women.

Women are the dominant economic group – while still being the 'cotton wool' of this patriarchal society. They are often the main breadwinner in a household, run most small businesses and are a major force in agricultural production. It is primarily women who have borne the brunt of more than a decade of international economic sanctions, and it is women whose livelihoods – and lives – have been jeopardized by the recent UN-sponsored 'peace' agreement.

The post-Pol Pot Communist government managed with few resources to return Cambodia's social, cultural, and economic life to a respectable level, however poor. Cambodians once again could send their children to schools, earn a living, buy their

food in markets, and practise Buddhism, all of which were prohibited during the Khmer Rouge period. Collective farm policies especially helped widows with young children; this system ensured an equal share of produce for women who were then neither materially nor physically equipped for farming – it gave them time to get on their feet again.

Despite all the back-breaking work of women, poverty is still widespread, especially among the almost 40 per cent of families headed by women; studies over the last 13 years have revealed that women remain consistently among the poorest in every village. Most of the Cambodia's 8.5 million people live below the poverty line with an estimated per-capita income of \$110. This is a country perennially short of food. There is no supply of clean water and not enough medicine. US-made equipment ranging from tractors to shovels could not be purchased by (or donated to) Cambodia; tools, irrigation pumps, draft animals, vac-

cines for animals and fertilizers have been very difficult to come by. This lack of basic infrastructure causes one fourth of Cambodian children to die before the age of five. Raising children in such circumstances is a daunting task.

Living in Prey Veng province, Yung is a 50-year-old widow who has brought up six children, now aged between 16 and 32. They all lived through 'Pol Pot time'. Her husband was arrested and killed with five other villagers by the Khmer Rouge forces in 1976, when her sixth child was only one month old. Soon after, her three eldest children were also taken away. She bravely raced to the warehouse where they were being held, and demanded that the Khmer Rouge kill her first if they were going to kill her children. As a result of her protest the children were later released.

Yung and her three younger sons now live in a shack built of palm leaves. Her previous and more substantial house, which had been built by her husband, was dismantled by Pol Pot's forces. A few years ago one of her sons joined the army and injured his right arm in a battle against the Khmer Rouge. Around the same time, her youngest son contracted measles and, lacking medicine, became blind. Her other son is in his teens and is at school. As the war goes on she nervously enjoys his company and assistance around the house.

Rice farming has been Yung's main occupation. She explains that during the rice-growing season, 'We are busy non-stop for four months. This includes three months of regulating the supply of water using a *rohat* (a hand-operated device). We wake up very early in the morning, cook rice and pack our lunch, walk for one hour to the field, and are ready to start work at six. We don't get home until five or six in the evening. Friends and relatives usually feed us.'

Friends and relatives play an important role in Yung's life. They are the ones who help her with the heavy work such as ploughing the fields or repairing her house. But still, she has to do many other tasks herself, including patching the roof of her house, making axe and knife handles, raising dikes and driving an ox-cart.

Rice production has been insufficient for her family to live on, and each year she faces the same problems of not having enough fertilizers, insecticides, seeds, equipment or irrigation pumps to boost her production. To make ends meet Yung sells cakes, gathers firewood and tends her coconut, palm sugar and banana trees.

Yet despite the responsibilities of women like Yung, the Cambodian woman is still expected to behave in accordance with the wishes of her family. She is expected to be more gentle and softly spoken than a man and do more work around

the house than her brothers. She is not encouraged to stay in school or to make decisions about her future. Cambodian women are usually reticent when talking about their status, but the burden they carry is so striking that some have come out to say they are 'the backbone of the family'.

One result of the sex-ratio imbalance is that polygamy, although illegal, is quite widespread, especially in the cities. City women, widowed or single, feel vulnerable living alone and are socially, financially and emotionally pressured to accept partners, even married ones. Many children are born outside wedlock. The polygamous match itself usually ends disastrously with women fighting for the one man. Divorce is legal, but is not easily accepted socially. So many women endure the life of an unhappy marriage, knowing full well that the competition for men is fierce. All in all, the situation is favourable for men and many of them exploit it.

In the countryside this is less common. Working side by side in the field, they know what others are doing and little can be hidden. Also, as a peasant woman put it to me: 'A man can't feed two or three women; it is hard enough to have one wife.'

Chanthou Boua was born in 1952 in Kompong Cham province, Cambodia, the eldest of eight children. Her father was a village schoolteacher. The family moved to Phnom Penh in 1963. After attending Phnom Penh University she moved to Australia and gained degrees in economics, education and sociology from the University of New South Wales, Melbourne State College and the University of Wollongong. In 1975 her parents and brothers and sisters were expelled from the capital by the Khmer Rouge and returned to



their native village. In 1977 and 1978 the entire family of nine was massacred by Khmer Rouge forces. Boua is author of *Children of the Killing Fields* (University of Wollongong Centre for Multicultural Studies, 1990) and co-editor of *Peasants and Politics in Kampuchea, 1942-1981* (London and New York, 1982), and of *Pol Pot Plans the Future: Confidential Leadership Documents from Democratic Kampuchea, 1976-77* (Yale Southeast Asia Council, 1988). She has worked on various aid programmes in Cambodia since 1980 and now lives in the US.

In no way would we allow him to get away with having more.'

A serious problem for Cambodian women is the spread of AIDS. In a country whose poverty is so widespread, especially among women, the injection of 21,000 UN officials and thousands of Thais and other Asian entrepreneurs is a risk. Cambodian women with very little knowledge of AIDS and desperate for a living, are going to be the target of this fatal disease. Detected HIV cases increased from one in 1991 to over 60 in 1992. 'Peace in exchange for AIDS' is no fair deal.

Despite the truce, Khmer Rouge attacks on villages have escalated. The Khmer Rouge also stir up racial antagonism against ethnic Vietnamese to the brink of explosion. On 21 July in a small village in Kampot province near the Vietnamese border, an ethnic Vietnamese couple and their seven-day old son, four other children aged seven to 16 – Cambodians whose grandmother was Vietnamese – and their uncle, were all massacred and mutilated by Khmer Rouge gunmen. On 27 December seven Vietnamese females and six males, and two Cambodians were summarily executed by the Khmer Rouge.

No Cambodian political parties or human rights organizations dare speak out against these atrocities. It is perceived as too politically costly. But they forget that the Khmer Rouge, when in power between 1975 and 1978, killed their own people for having 'Vietnamese heads on Khmer bodies'. The phenomenon is certain to recur if the Khmer Rouge return to power. In fact the UN should take responsibility for such atrocities, because the UN Security Council legitimized the Khmer Rouge, knowing well their anti-Vietnamese hysteria.

The UN must do something quickly to stop more killing of innocent women and children, Vietnamese or Cambodians. The UN peace plan has spent billions of dollars but little of it helps the people of Cambodia with roads, fertilizer, irrigation systems, clean drinking water, health or training, all of which are important factors in restoring stability to Cambodia and a successful search for democracy. Aid is an important factor in a developing country such as Cambodia, where many people are still concerned about their next meal. Democracy cannot take root among people with empty stomachs. It is obvious to visitors that the people's living standard is so low – especially in the rural areas and especially among women – that they can easily be intimidated by political parties. Women are going to be an important factor in the coming election, since they are the majority. True democratic elections, successful development and therefore peace require the involvement of women in every field and at every level. ■

VILLAGE VOICES

Hear no evil

Fear has ruled Cambodian life for 20 years, but Ritta believes it can be challenged by solidarity.



CLAUDE SAUVAGEOT

CANDLE light intensifies the large dark eyes of the young woman as she talks of her dream for her village. She is not well educated but alert and thoughtful. Her brown curling hair brushes against the handmade lace collar of her soft blouse. Her feet are bare inside the house of course, but she wears with neat precision the tight skirt, the locally-made *sombot*.

I look at the photographs framed against the bare wooden wall, for I know well this family in their Svey Reing village. The honoured image is of *aupuk* (the father), executed in Pol Pot times simply because he was the widely respected teacher, the most educated man in the village. Ritta was six at the time. She remembers most of all that the family dared not weep when the news of father's death was whispered to them. Spies who were watching for tears were ready to denounce the whole family as traitors. I watch her forthright expression, her graceful gestures. If the man who looks down from the photograph could see her now he would indeed be proud.

The widowed mother has never managed to climb from poverty to educate the six children to their potential. Simply to sit for an examination costs thousands of *riels* which the family can never find. But the qualities of the parents live on in the children. Ritta has received a heritage of intelligence and wisdom. Her *aupuk* is remembered with respect throughout the district even now, and many women and men come to her mother for wise advice. The spirit of this family has not been quenched in all the hardship of the last 20 years.

Ritta is firm in her assessment of Cambodia's main problem. She gains confidence as she speaks and her voice is strong with conviction. 'Most of our people are so poor that the hearts of all must be moved with pity. But the rich do not care about the poor. Sometimes even the people of the village do not help one another. My mother told me of the way people trusted and helped one another when she was young. But the terrible times broke down the trust. The people must make a new solidarity.'

Ritta's own short life has seen this breaking of trust. While she was a very small girl army convoys with supplies for the communist forces in nearby Vietnam came trundling through the village. The people were warned that they must stay inside their

houses after dark: 'Hear no evil. Speak no evil. See no evil.' But the small boys watched from the sugar palms as small boys will. The village knew. And the fathers and mothers had their opinions, but most dared not talk.

Soon the Americans bombed the ferry crossing close by. 'Hear no evil.' Then came the Khmer Rouge and the spies. For fear of life, of course, you could not talk. After the liberation, the conscription and still the fear of spies. And now, this year, the year of the elections, fear, fear, fear. The whole authority of the United Nations could not put things together again. Ritta and her mother are disappointed. They had hoped. I watch them as they lean forward in the flickering light, talking softly. 'Clat.' Fear. I am thinking: 'All the king's horses and all the king's men have not been able to mend it.'

But Ritta does not give up easily. 'The Cambodian people must do this for ourselves. We must learn again to pity the poor. We must work together and trust each other.'

I look around the austere little house. There is not one item here that is not essential, a few mosquito nets, a few mats, a cooking pot for the glowing fire, a few clothes hanging on nails in the wall. For this and the food the whole family works long hours hand sowing and hand harvesting the rice. And when the rice fields do not need attention, Ritta goes up to Phnom Penh to work 16-hour shifts in a restaurant.

How much poorer can you get? But I know the answer. Poorer is the old lady across the track who is blind with trachoma and begs for a small handful of rice grains. Poorer is the young man whose arm was amputated because he did not have money for the more difficult surgery to repair a bullet injury. Poorer is the young mother whose only possible means of income is prostitution.

'Cambodian problems that Cambodians can begin to resolve together,' says Ritta firmly. She and her mother are trying to persuade the village leader to gather the people and dig wells by hand, or at least ponds. In places where everyone could share the water. The women should learn about AIDS. More knowledge, more co-operation. Ritta's face is alive with enthusiasm.

The spirit of her father lives on.

Joan Healy



NIC DUNLOP

A menace to civilization

*Land mines are thickly sewn in the new killing fields of Cambodia. **John Pilger** meets some old Cambodian friends and US-Vietnam War veterans who are repairing the damage.*

I WENT to Ron Podlaski's wedding the other night. After the monks had left and everyone had been garlanded in jasmine, Ron and Bo Pha, his Khmer bride, stood in the narrow street most of the day and night, clasping hands with hundreds of people. Many were guests; many were street people. All were invited. I shall not easily forget them.

On a table of honour were six young men, none of them more than 21 years old, who had lost one or both legs in Cambodia's minefields. Recognizing each other, we raised our beers in a boisterous toast; I had met them a few days earlier at Kien Khlang, on the banks of the Mekong, where Ron runs the Vietnam Project's

Limb Centre. One of them, a cherubic boy of 18, had strapped on to his uneven stumps two new legs, made from beaten tin and rubber, and heaved himself on to the parallel bars. He walked for the first time since an 'antipersonnel' land mine had left him a bleeding ruin.

He walked at his first try, with the other amputees encouraging him in the soft, tonal lilt of Khmer. The next day he set off without the aid of bars. 'Didn't you fall at all?' I asked him at the wedding. 'No, not once,' he said. And when I asked him why he and his friends had not worn their new legs, he said: 'Tonight we intend to drink a lot of beer. Legs aren't necessary for that, they get in the way!' The interpreter could

barely tell me this over their laughter. They had come from Kien Khlang on a fleet of motorcycles, riding pillion, each with bouquets and gifts for Ron and Bo Pha.

Cambodia is menaced now perhaps more than ever by land mines, which are almost everywhere. According to a study by Asia Watch, the American human-rights organization, up to 700 amputations are performed every month. No other country has a higher percentage of disabled people and amputees. Almost all of this is due to mines, which all sides use and describe as 'eternal sentinels, never sleeping, always ready to attack'.

In its report, *The Coward's War*, Asia Watch named two foreign powers that 'are



DAVID MUNRO

The Vietnam Project's Limb Centre: giving the Jaipur Limb a go.

or have been involved in the use of mines and explosives against civilian as well as military targets'. They are China and Britain. Asia Watch confirmed that the British SAS (an elite military squad) had trained Cambodian guerillas allied to the Khmer Rouge, and the mines and booby traps in the SAS training programme were standardized among the guerilla groups, including the Khmer Rouge. In January 1992, Amnesty International published a report, *Repression Trade UK Limited: how the UK makes torture and death its business*, which highlights the mines training by the SAS.

Today, British soldiers are ensconced with the Khmer Rouge, this time as a United Nations force, training them to clear mines in their headquarters in Pailin. Here you enter and leave only with permission of the Khmer Rouge who, not surprisingly, asked for the British. The Thatcher/Hurd denials of Britain's training of the Khmer Rouge are a mockery now. British servicemen with the UN speak openly about the SAS's legacy. In his current *Cambodian Chronicles*, Raoul Jennar reports that a British UN officer told him, 'they (the British) know very well the Khmer Rouge military tactics because they have been teaching them during the 80s'.

The carnage left by mines, which the UN has described as 'one of the worst modern man-made disasters of the century', is a ubiquitous presence. If tourism has any use in Cambodia today, it is to remind those other than journalists and aid workers of this shocking fact. Just to walk through Phnom Penh is to run a gauntlet of limbless

phantoms, some of them in threadbare uniforms, many of them children. A teenager without hands comes at you from a doorway. He has touched a mine.

The trauma reaches deep into Khmer society. A woman without a limb has little hope of marrying; a limbless man is unlikely to work. Both will fall back on a social fabric already torn by years of bombing and genocide and a decade-long blockade led by the US and China and imposed by the 'international community'.

It is this that makes the work of Ron Podlaski and the other American Vietnam veterans who run the limb centre such an important counterweight, however small, to the foreign forces that still beleaguer this nation. At the very least they provide a glimpse of the human resources, both Khmer and foreign, that could begin to restore Cambodia.

Ron is a big, rumbustious man in his forties who was hauled before a judge in New York in 1968 and told he was a 'menace to civilization'. 'I had hit a cop on the head,' he said. 'This was normal behaviour where I grew up. The judge said, "I'll give you a choice: Vietnam or jail". I said, "Where's Vietnam?" He said, "Across the George Washington Bridge".'

Ron joined the Special Forces, running secret missions into Laos and Cambodia. 'We were told to use amphetamines to keep from falling asleep,' he said, 'because we couldn't trust the local people not to kill us in our beds. These were the people we were meant to be fighting for. They hated us. I learned quickly.'

Like many veterans, Ron came home an addict and angry, believing that he had been conned. I didn't meet him at the Lincoln Memorial in 1971 when he and other veterans threw back their medals; but I think I remember his larger-than-life presence. I certainly remember Bobby Muller at the Republican Party's convention in Miami the following year. I remember his booming eloquence reaching the candidate, Richard Nixon, over the catcalls of the faithful. He shouted to Nixon that he was lying when he promised 'peace with honour' to Indochina. For that, he was thrown out in his wheelchair.

Bobby was a marine who had been shot in the spine, losing the use of his legs. In 1978 he and Ron and Ed Miles and others formed the Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation and have since devoted themselves to preventing a repeat of such an adventure. They have funded a curriculum for schools and colleges on the Vietnam War, seeking to end the 'historical amnesia' that has allowed the same people in Washington to pursue 'other Vietnams'. They have initiated projects in Vietnam for children orphaned by the War. Here in Cambodia they have produced their most

remarkable achievement.

Encouraged by a documentary film I made with David Munro in 1989, they set up the prosthetics centre at Kien Khlang using the 'Jaipur limb'. Developed by Dr PK Sethi in Jaipur, this is a simple aluminium leg with a latex foot that requires no high-tech components, making it ideal for Third World conditions. The foot moves almost naturally from side to side and using the limb requires minimal training, because of the confidence it gives.

The prosthetist is Dave Evans, who lost both his legs in Vietnam before his 19th birthday. Back home, he retrained as a nurse and went to El Salvador where he became the director of a prosthetics programme helping the FMLN guerillas. He walks and runs, almost like an athlete. The centre employs three Indian trainers from Jaipur and soon Khmer trainers, most of them amputees, will begin to take over. They fit some 150 limbs a month.

The United Nations has deployed seven military units to train Khmers to clear mines. In one area of Kompong Thom province, less than 52 out of 4,000 mines have been cleared in six months. In Battambang province not a single mine has been cleared. Instead, the people are clearing the mines: farmers with spades, children with sling shots; and by stepping on them. 'We have done virtually nothing,' a UN Dutch army mine clearer told me. 'What are we here for?'

At Ron Podlaski's wedding, the Khmer band played rock'n'roll; the Indian trainers from the limb centre – Roddy, Than and Abdul – danced to the sitar; and Bo Pha wore several magnificent dresses of incandescent brightness. Like most Khmers who knew the Pol Pot era, her eyes have a wistfulness, a distance and a deep sadness. Bo Pha's father, two brothers and brother-in-law were all murdered by the Khmer Rouge. 'I have a boat and weapons ready,' said Ron. 'If they look like coming back, we'll get everybody out that we have to...'

The day after the wedding Ron, Dave, Bobby and Ed were at Phnom Penh airport on their way to Vietnam, where they plan another limb centre. It is one of their many current projects, including a worldwide campaign to ban the use and production of land mines. Watching the four of them cross the tarmac to their aircraft – only one of them, Ron, has the use of his legs – I recalled Martha Gellhorn's tribute to that 'lifesaving minority of Americans who judge their government in moral terms, who are the people with a wakeful conscience and can be counted upon... they are always there.'

For a briefing on groups working with amputees and others see 'Action' pp 12-13. Contributions to the work of the limb centre can be sent via War on Want, marked 'Cambodia Limbs Project', to 37-39 Great Guildford Street, London SE1 0ES.

VILLAGE VOICES

The good monk of Turtle Mountain

Love and despair share the heart of the Buddhist monk who wonders how to do good in such terrible times.



CLAUDE SAUVAGEOT

It has, as my neighbour says, been a religious day. She has at last held the ceremony for her husband, killed in the years when there was no time to mourn. As she sits on the wooden steps of her house in the crimson sunset she sighs with the satisfaction of an important task completed. She recalls the details of the day. Normally loquacious and loud, tonight she is pensive.

The past few hours have made all the weeks of preparation, the years of longing, worthwhile. Neighbours packed the house this morning, they honoured the pictures of the husband and burned incense. They sat in tight circles on the straw mat and ate the food she had been preparing for days. But not until the monks had finished their chanting and their eating of course. The head monk stayed until last and did the washing ceremony with the family. Two buckets of water and flower petals were poured over the mourners, right here as they sat on these steps. Saturated, they cupped the water running down their bodies and held it to their faces, wet clothes clinging, laughing as if the troubles were now finished. Washing away the blood with the water, as it is said.

The head monk was a good man; we both agree about that. I sense a new ease, a new peace in my neighbour and resolve to visit the *wat* and talk more to that monk.

There are hundreds of steps up the Turtle Mountain to reach Wat Andek, so the morning is already bright with sun before we reach the top. The man with the reputation for goodness sits cross-legged on a wooden bench, strikingly still, looking to the far horizons in each direction. It is as though he could see inside

the villages stretched out below, and right to the hazy mountains where the fighting continues.

We talk about life, about truth, integrity and love. He says he feels close in heart to those of any religion who would have pity on all of this suffering that he sees. Meditate, love your neighbour as yourself. 'But how do we do it?' he asks. 'How *twer lahore* (do good) in these terrible times?' Great love is needed and pity and listening with the mind and the heart. Sometimes he himself loses hope. I watch his creased and kindly 73-year-old face. Though 40 years a monk he wonders now if he has ever done anything good. But even as he speaks of his inner struggle he gives strength to others. He tells honestly of his desolation and I and the white-clad nun at my side are moved to hope.

The Turtle Mountain is riddled with caves, places of meditation. Shafts of light enter from the tangled green growth above. The sense of prayer down there is tangible. He tells me of the prophecy which has been among the people for hundreds of years. There would come a time when people stopped believing. The moon would turn to blood and terrible deeds would happen. After that a time when men and women would be totally confused about who the enemy was or where the attack would come from. Danger would be from any of the eight directions: N, NE, E, SE, S, SW, W, NW. In these years another short time of the Killing Field before the peace. I shudder. The cave feels cold and desolate.

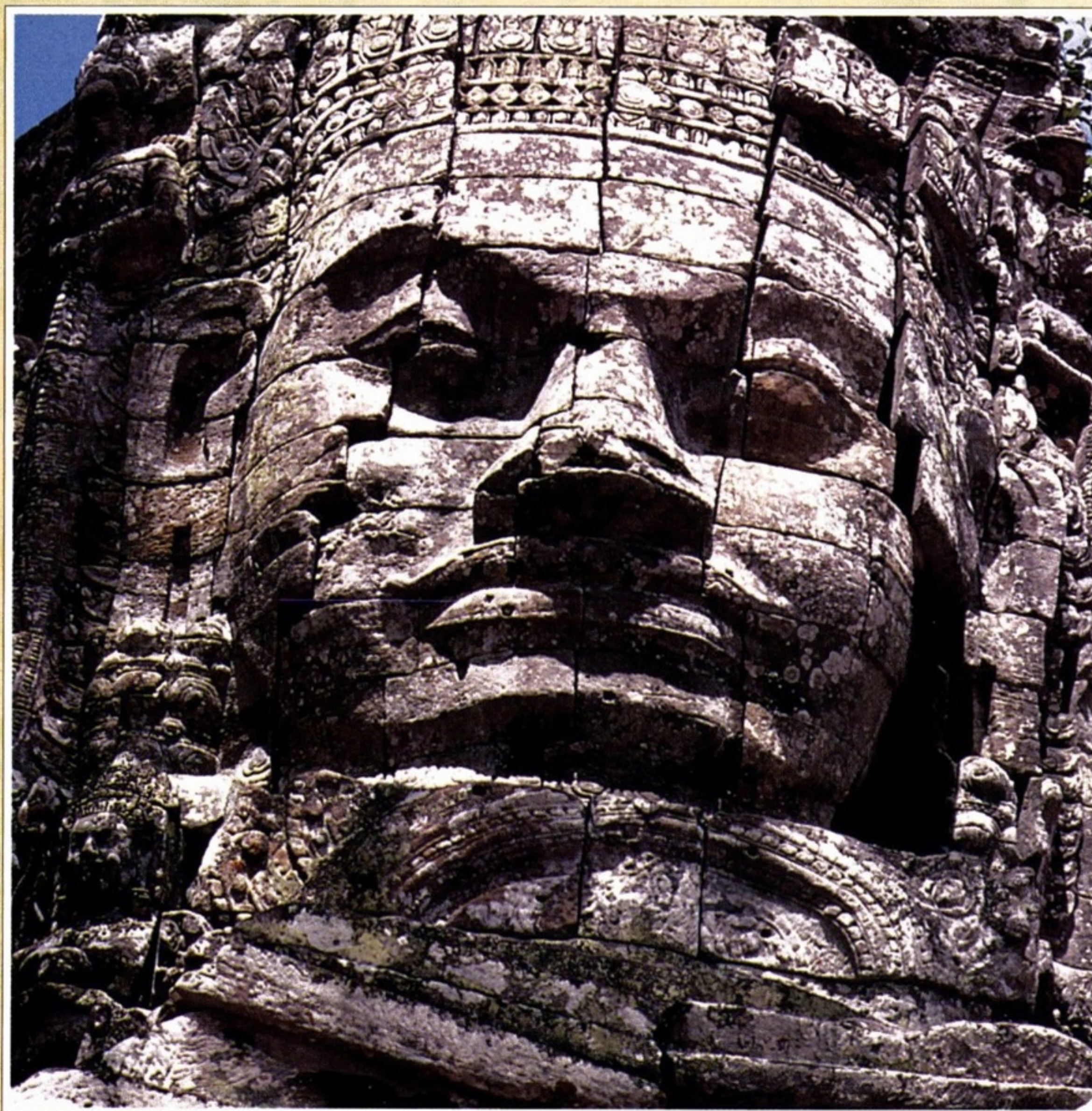
Wash away the blood.

Joan Healy

Simply... Cambodian history

1 Magnificent beginnings

All roads in Cambodian history lead to Angkor Wat – and Pol Pot was particularly conscious of trying to emulate the independent greatness that the temple city symbolized. 'If our people were capable of building Angkor,' he said, 'we can do anything.' Completed around 1150 and devoted to the Hindu god Vishnu, it remains the largest religious building the world has ever known. Legend has it that it was built not by human hands but by Indra, the Lord of Heaven, who sailed down to earth for the purpose. Actually its creation was ordered by King Suryavarman II, one of a series of Khmer monarchs, culminating in the most powerful of all, Jayavarman VII, whose preoccupation was with building monuments at home and pursuing the conquest of surrounding countries. The magnificent buildings we now see are legacies of the insatiable demands for forced labour and military service that these kings laid upon their people – and which had their twentieth-century echo in the Khmer Rouge.



2 Under French 'protection'

The abandonment of Angkor in 1432 under pressure from the Thais was accompanied by a shift away from dependence on agriculture and towards maritime trade; as such Cambodia competed as an equal with other countries in the region. But by the eighteenth century the country had become a pawn in the games of its two more powerful neighbours: the north was under Thai control and Vietnam had expanded southwards to take possession of the Mekong Delta area around modern Saigon. This period of subjection to the whims of Thailand and Vietnam is essential to understanding the country's recent history. The squabbling was resolved by the intervention of France, which had imperialist ambitions for the whole of Indo-China and offered to protect Cambodian independence. This 'protection' had many similarities with that afforded by Al Capone in 1920s Chicago: it was a licence to extort wealth and guarantee power. Cambodia effectively became one of the five provinces of French Indo-China, providing fuel for France's industrialization and competition with the other 'Great Powers'. Khmer resistance to French rule was less trenchant than in Vietnam – the establishment of the Indochina Communist Party by Ho Chi Minh in 1930, for example, produced an immediate response in Vietnam but not in Cambodia.

3 Faith and fire

Early Cambodia was largely Hindu in religion, though this was always mingled with a large measure of animism. There was a Mahayana Buddhist tradition too but when Buddhism eventually became established it was the Theravada strain (imported from Sri Lanka via Burma) which took hold.

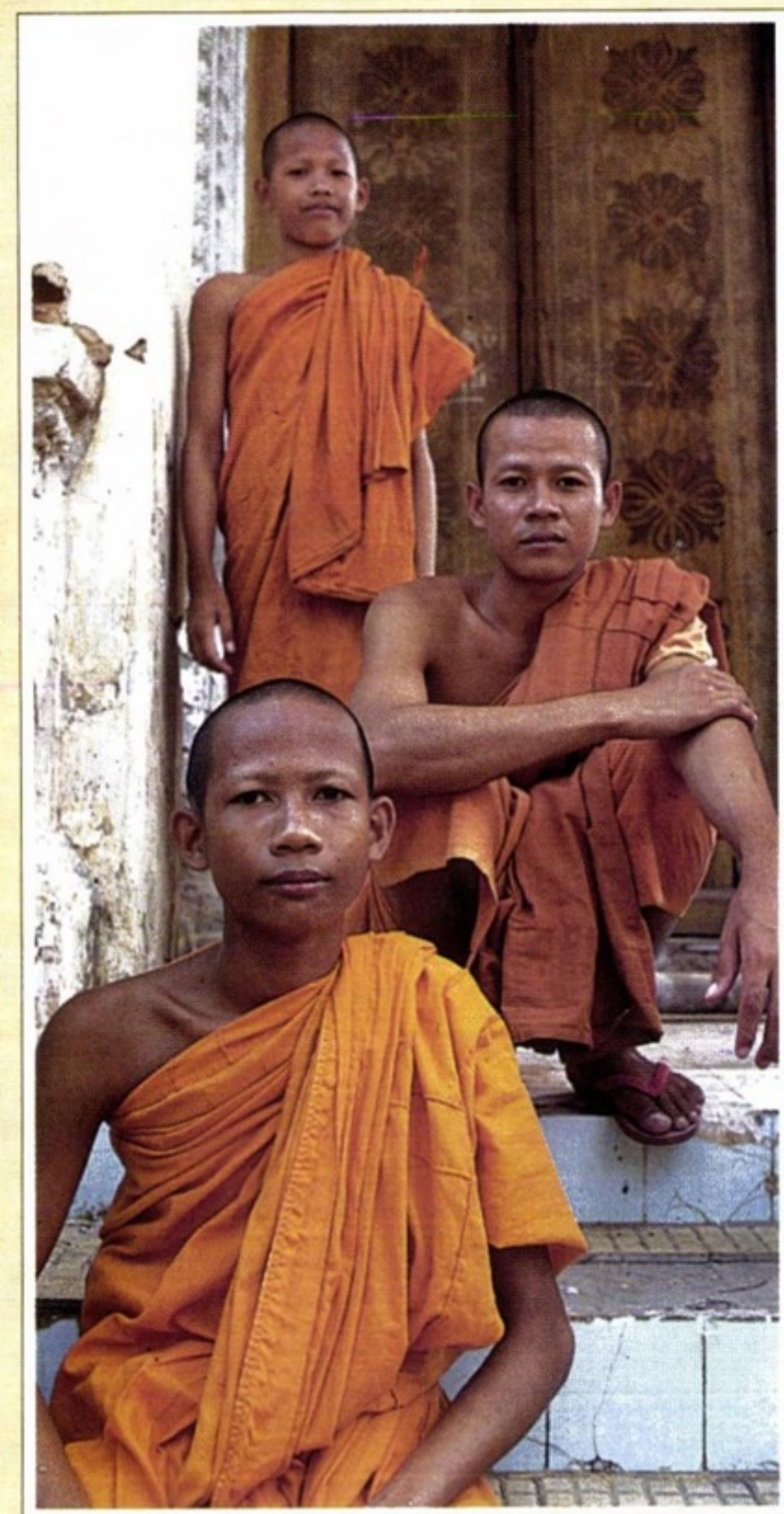
The modern Cambodian sense of cultural and ethnic identity largely derives from this Buddhist faith and the *sangha* – the community of ordained monks – is among the nation's most cherished institutions. But the *sangha* has still not recovered from its near-total destruction in the 1970s by the Khmer Rouge, which turned temples into pigpens and forced monks to marry or join the army.

Before 1975 there were 62,000 monks; by 1979 fewer than 2,000 remained, mostly in Thai refugee camps. Khmer Rouge Education Minister Yun Yat observed in 1978: 'Under the old regime peasants believed in Buddhism, which the ruling class utilized as a propaganda instrument. With the development of revolutionary consciousness, the people stopped believing and the monks left the temples. The problem gradually becomes extinguished. Hence there is no problem.'



4 Descent to war

The French hold on Cambodia was weakened during the Second World War, when Indochina was threatened by Japan's all-conquering armies. With Japan's backing, the Thais seized Cambodia's north-western provinces in 1940, though it took until 1945 for the Japanese finally to take full control of Indo-China. Japanese defeat by the Allies meant that Cambodia briefly gained independence and when the French tried to resume control they had to contend with growing support for Ho Chi Minh's Indochina Communist Party. Traditional suspicion of the Vietnamese was set aside as Cambodian communists and nationalists alike joined the Vietnamese in fighting the colonial power. In 1954 France was defeated at Dien Bien Phu and forced to withdraw from the whole of Indochina; Cambodia became independent under the rule of King Norodom Sihanouk, who had been crowned in 1941.



6 The Holocaust

Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge forces defeated Lon Nol's army and took Phnom Penh on 17 April 1975. The cities were immediately evacuated and the country was cut off from the outside world. Surrendering officials and soldiers of the Lon Nol regime were murdered. All Cambodians were forced into unpaid agricultural labour. The evacuation to the north-west of hundreds of thousands of city-dwellers brought about mass starvation within a year. In 1977 a second wave of bloody purges convulsed Cambodia, as Pol Pot's group attempted to eliminate moderates and dissidents throughout society. Attacks were also launched across all three of Cambodia's borders, massacring civilians in Thailand, Vietnam and Laos. Further massive purges in 1978 sparked an uprising in the eastern zone; the rebels, led by Heng Samrin, were pushed over the Vietnamese border, where they called for help from Hanoi.



7 The quest for peace

In 1979 **Vietnamese troops** invaded and overthrew the Khmer Rouge, installing Heng Samrin as President and Hun Sen as Foreign Minister. Despite the evidence which emerged of the genocide committed by Pol Pot's regime Western nations condemned the invasion and imposed a trade-and-aid embargo on both Vietnam and Cambodia (then called Kampuchea). The Khmer Rouge retained the country's UN seat with the support of China and the West, and the promise of US aid brought Sihanouk and another non-communist rebel, Son Sann, into a coalition-in-exile with the Khmer Rouge. In 1989 Vietnamese troops withdrew from Cambodia and the rebels resumed their military offensive in earnest. The newly proclaimed State of Cambodia government under Hun Sen held them at bay but was forced by the continuing Western embargo and the complete withdrawal of Soviet aid to come to terms with the Khmer Rouge. Under the UN Paris Agreement of 1991 all parties agreed on a ceasefire and disarmament to be followed by free elections. But the Khmer Rouge have refused to disarm and have continued their offensive throughout the pre-election period, utterly disregarding the authority of the UN. Ordinary Cambodians are left, as they have been for two decades, praying for peace.



5 Enter the US

As the **US-Vietnam War** escalated Cambodia tried to maintain a careful neutrality. Sihanouk broke off relations with the US, while continuing to crack down on domestic dissent. In 1967 Pol Pot's group of communists launched an insurgency against Sihanouk in the north-west and met with brutal repression. Two years later the US began bombing Vietnamese sanctuaries in Cambodia and a more pliant regime in Phnom Penh became more of a priority for the Americans. A coup set up Lon Nol as President of the pro-US Khmer Republic: Sihanouk went into exile in China and the US-Vietnam War spilled over into Cambodia. Lon Nol initially won support but became increasingly dictatorial and corrupt. By 1973 the US B-52 raids had reached their peak: in four years the bombing killed at least 50,000 civilians. Pol Pot's forces used the bombing as recruitment propaganda and an excuse for purging moderate socialists.



ALL PHOTOGRAPHS: CLAUDE SAUVAGEOT EXCEPT B-52 BOMBER BY SIPRI AND MONKS BY NIC DUNLOP

'Where do I start?'

Very few aid agencies were willing to defy the 'official' embargo and get help through to the Cambodian people.

John Pilger remembers how it was done by Oxfam.

ONE of the most informed and courageous voices on Cambodia has belonged to the humanitarian relief agency, Oxfam UK, which in 1979 defied government pressure and went to help the stricken nation following the overthrow of Pol Pot.

That June representatives of the main voluntary agencies were called to the Foreign Office, where they were told that the British boycott of Vietnam now applied to Cambodia. They were warned that the Vietnamese were 'obstructing' aid and that if they attempted to fly into Phnom Penh they might be fired upon. This was official deception on a grand scale, setting the tone for British policy to the present day.

At the meeting was Jim Howard, an engineer and then Oxfam's senior 'fireman', a veteran of disaster relief in Biafra, India, the Sahel, Latin America and Asia. Oxfam ignored the Foreign Office 'warning'. Howard flew to Paris with \$30,000 in cash and got in touch with an air charter company, based in Luxembourg, whose Icelandic and Danish pilots had a reputation for flying 'anything anywhere'. They were prepared to fly a DC8 cargo aircraft to Phnom Penh; Howard set about loading it with drugs, vitamins and powdered milk. On August 19 he sent his passport to the Vietnamese embassy in Paris, where it was stamped and returned to him that afternoon. A few hours later he was airborne.

When the aircraft landed at Bangkok to refuel, a source of obstruction which the Foreign Office had neglected to mention – the Thai regime – refused to allow it to fly on to Phnom Penh. 'We told them "OK",' said Howard, "'We'll fly somewhere else; we'll fly to Saigon instead". So they finally let us take off and we circled out over the South China Sea and indeed flew over Saigon, before heading for Phnom Penh. The pilot couldn't believe his eyes. There was nothing at Phnom Penh airport. We did one low run and went in. There wasn't even a fork lift. We lifted the supplies down by hand. All the skilled people were dead, or in hiding. But there was willingness and gratitude. We landed at eleven in the morning; by four o'clock that afternoon the milk and antibiotics were being given to the children.'

I was already in Phnom Penh, working by candle light in my room at the Hotel Royale. The afternoon monsoon had been so insistent that rain had poured through the louvres of the french windows and two



rats scampered to and fro across the puddles. When Jim Howard walked in I was endeavouring to compile a list of urgently needed items – the very things he had brought – which I intended to give to the Australian ambassador in Bangkok. To illustrate the enormity of what had happened I told him that, down the road, one man was struggling to care for 50 starving orphans. 'Where do I start?' he said: words that would make for him, and others at Oxfam, a fitting epitaph.

So began one of the boldest rescue operations in history. Shortly afterwards a barge left Singapore, sailing into the north-eastern monsoon with 1,500 tons of Oxfam seed on board. Deputy director Guy Stringer had put the whole remarkable venture together in a few weeks and with just \$75,000.

Back in London Oxfam's director, Brian Walker, stood his ground calmly against press charges of 'aiding communists'. But its very presence in Cambodia and the success of its schemes have made it enemies from London to Washington to Bangkok.

At the same time the Cambodian emergency had a profound influence on the way Oxfam saw its responsibilities. Many Oxfam workers believed it was no longer enough to dispense 'Band Aid charity' and that the organization should take more literally its stated obligation 'to educate the public concerning the nature, causes and effects of poverty, distress and suffering'.

In 1988 Oxfam published *Punishing the Poor: The International Isolation of Kampuchea* by Eva Mysliwiec, Oxfam's American chief representative in Phnom Penh and the doyenne of voluntary-aid



Far left: Jim Howard. Left: Orphanage in Phnom Penh supported by aid agencies.

workers in Cambodia. She presented a picture of a people being punished by so-called civilized governments for being on the

'wrong side'. She identified the roots of their suffering in the US invasion of Indo-China. Her book was distributed throughout the world.

The reaction became an assault in 1990. A US-funded extreme right-wing lobby group, the International Freedom Foundation were among special interest groups presenting an 'Oxfam file' to the Charity Commission in London. Oxfam was never told officially who its accusers were or the precise nature of the accusations against them.

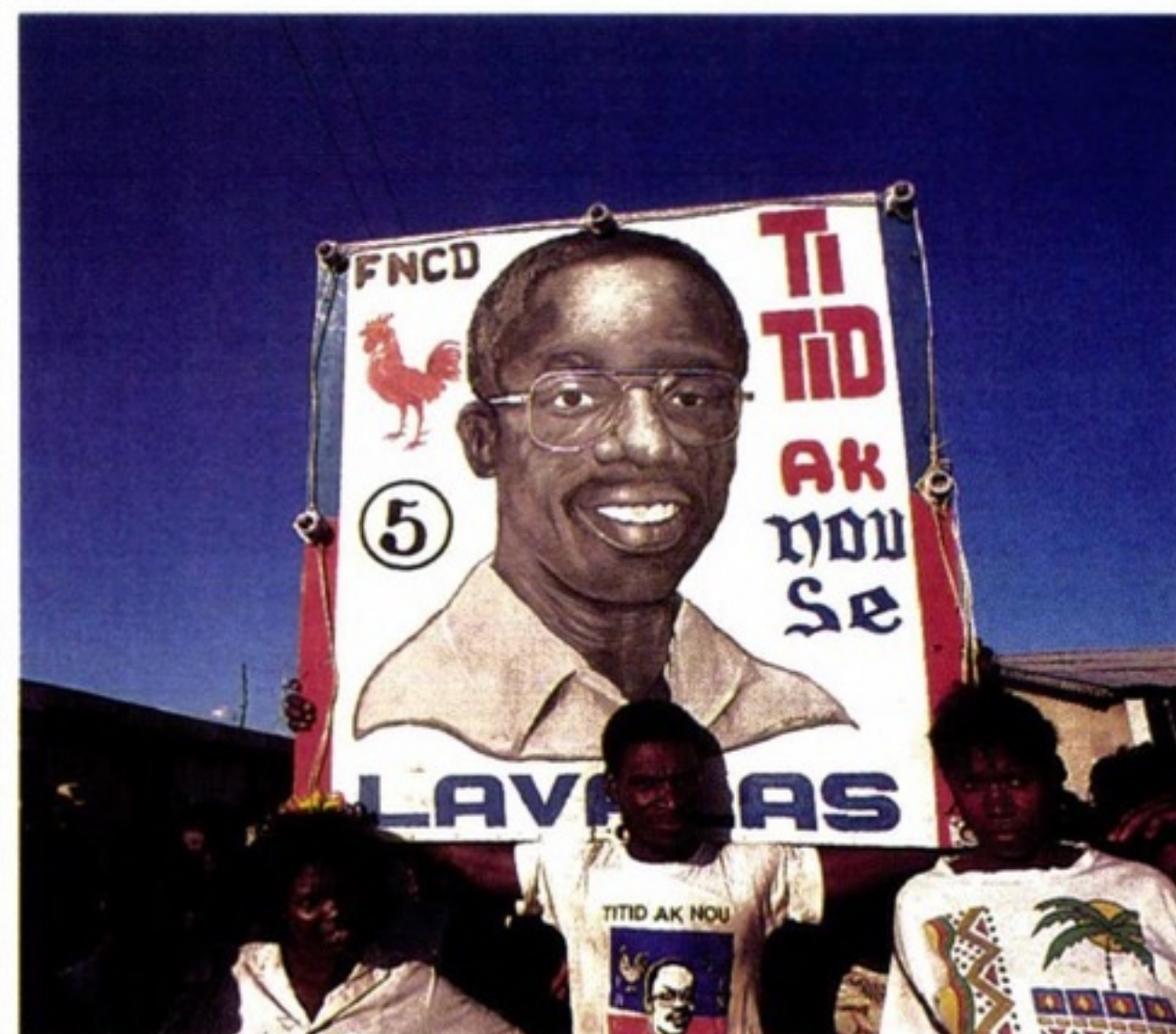
In 1991 the Charity Commission censured Oxfam for having 'prosecuted with too much vigour' its public-education campaign about Pol Pot's return. Threatened with a loss of its charity status Oxfam has withdrawn from sale a number of its most popular publications, including *Punishing the Poor*.

It seems to me that those who are meant to keep the record straight have two choices. They can blow the whistle and alert the world to the betrayal of Cambodia, as Oxfam did, and risk incurring a penalty, be it a smear or a sanction. Or they can follow the advice of Son Sen's wife, Yun Yat, who was minister of information during the years of genocide. In boasting that Buddhism had been virtually eradicated from Cambodia and that the monks had 'stopped believing' (most of them had been murdered), she said: 'The problem becomes extinguished. Hence there is no problem.'

HAITI



BOTH PHOTOS: MARC FRENCH / PANOS PICTURES



Left: The over-crowded ferry which capsized this February. 700 passengers were drowned. Above: Haitians demonstrating for the return of President Aristide – more than 2,000 have been shot since the coup.

The comedians

Beset with embargoes and tragedy

ALMOST two years after a military coup, the world is still holding a torch for Father Jean-Bertrand Aristide, the charismatic young priest-president and hero of Haiti's poor, who was overthrown by the army a few months after being elected.

The new rulers, who have presided over the violent death of some 2,000 people, are recognized only by the Vatican. The United Nations, backed by the US, Canada, France and others, seem determined to restore Aristide – the first freely-elected leader in Haiti's violent history.

A trade embargo was imposed after the coup in September 1991 and now the UN has forced army chief General Raoul Cedras and his allies – Haiti's tiny, light-skinned upper class – to accept a mission of foreign observers to monitor human rights violations in this, Latin America's poorest country.

Many doubt whether Aristide will ever manage to return, or if he does, survive an assassin's bullet. The army and the rich have played for time since their coup against the man they fear. For his plans were to overturn the system of social and racial apartheid that has prevailed since independence in 1804, ironically through a bloody revolt against French slavery.

The desperate economy has deteriorated still further over the last 18 months. Once the Caribbean island exported sugar, mangoes, coffee and 'offshore' light assembly products like baseballs, clothing, toys and electronic goods. Most of the US-owned assembly plants which employed 60,000

people but supported 250,000, closed after the coup. Now the only export is a little coffee. The embargo has destroyed much of the meagre infrastructure.

Virtually impassible roads led to tragedy this February. Some 700 passengers obliged to go by boat to market in the capital Port-au-Prince, drowned when a ferry from the remote western town of Jérémie capsized. Built to carry 250 people, the boat had more than 1,000 aboard. The cargo included 75 oxen, whose floating carcasses helped save many in the absence of any lifebelts or lifeboats.

Haitians' response to tyranny for the past 20 years, has been to flee in open, leaky boats to Florida in the hope of making a decent living. Thousands have drowned in the attempt. Most have been picked up by the US Coast Guard ships.

About a third of the 40,000 picked up since the coup have been admitted as candidates for political asylum. But Washington doesn't really want them, though it accepts anyone escaping from Castro's neighbouring Cuba. President Bush decreed a year ago that all new Haitian refugees should be turned back and President Clinton has continued the policy.

The world's shunning of Haiti has barely affected its rich. Dodging the ramshackle trade embargo as well as the increased drug smuggling, has created many new millionaires. Vital oil shipments have continued to get through from Europe.

Within the country the political deadlock

continues. The US and the UN have denounced recent sham elections and the Haitian Parliament is now paralyzed between pro-Aristide and pro-regime factions.

Despite their sufferings under the embargo, most Haitians are still fervently for Aristide, whom they regard as a saviour and the first president who has ever spoken up for Haiti's poor majority. But the army rank and file, who are also poor and live in the slums, are terrified of popular revenge for their repression if Aristide returns. The military is set firmly against him.

Greg Chamberlain

Bad blood in East Timor

Disturbing reports from East Timor, occupied by Indonesia since 1975, suggest that ancient ceremonies of kinship between tribes are being used by the authorities to secure the allegiance of Timorese rebels. Blood is forcibly removed by syringe from detained people. Confessions and oaths of allegiance to Indonesia are then extracted. Many Timorese believe that oaths made in such circumstances can be broken only on pain of death. Indonesia is claiming growing success in its repression of the Timorese guerilla resistance. In November 1992 the guerilla leader Xanana Gusmao was captured, and hundreds of guerillas are said to have surrendered. Meanwhile, British Aerospace has concluded a deal to sell 24 Hawk aircraft to the Indonesian government as part of a larger arms deal, making Britain the largest single supplier of arms to Indonesia.

Jean Dubois

STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENT

Getting vocal

Zambian pop star's musical protest

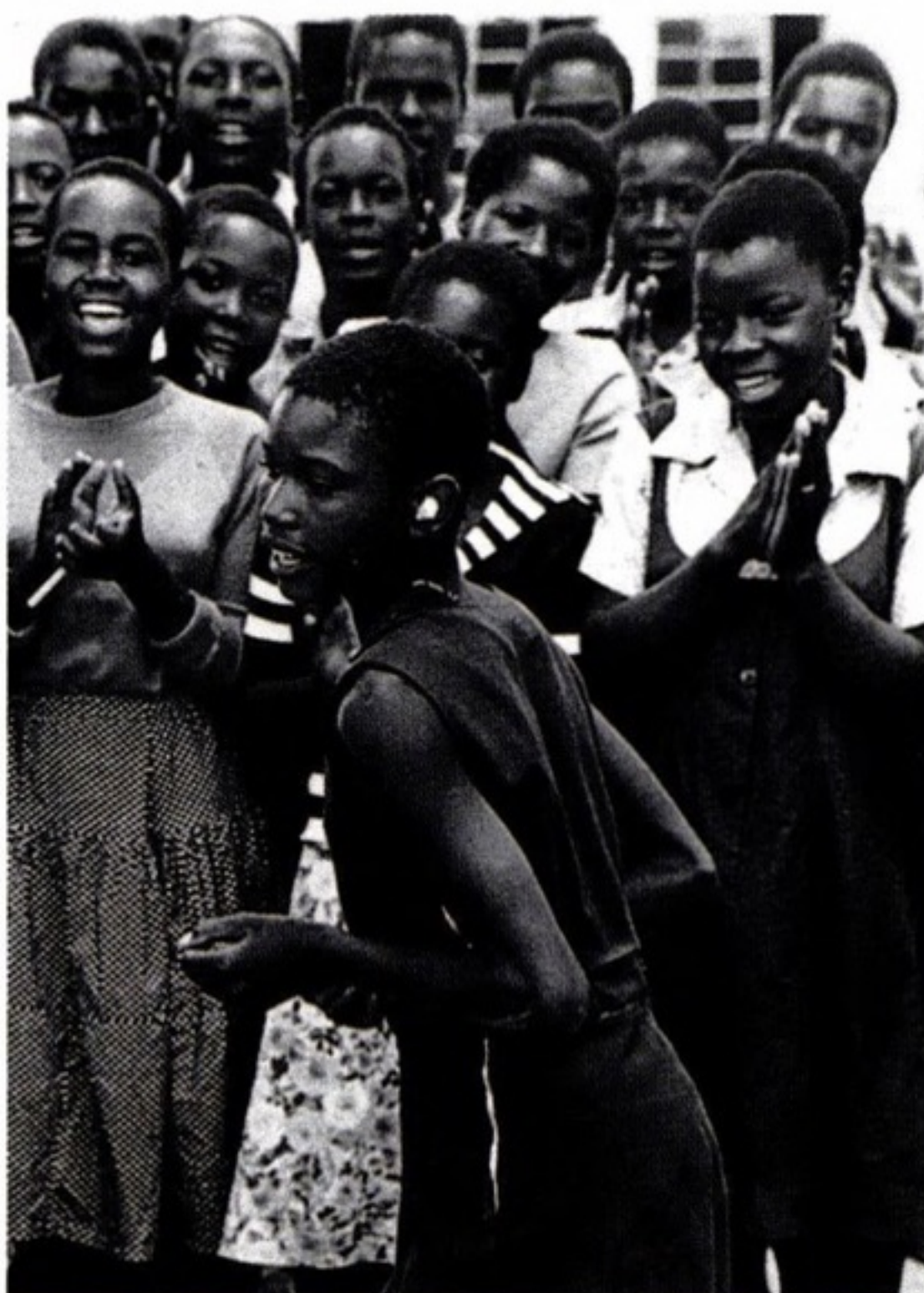
THE Structural Adjustment Programme in Zambia has gone farther than in most other countries of the sub-Saharan region. Within a year of his new government's popular rise to power, President Frederick Chiluba has daringly implemented all the IMF and World Bank's tough conditions and allowed market forces to run the economy unrestrained.

As a reward, foreign aid has poured in to the tune of \$1.7 billion in 1992 – most of it outright gifts. Zambia's \$7.5 billion foreign debt has been cut in half, either written off or rescheduled by outside agencies.

Chiluba has devalued the Zambian currency, the *kwacha*, by 120 per cent, freed prices and bank interest rates, liberalized trade and abolished foreign exchange controls. His privatization programme has seen 19 state companies sold and 20,000 public sector workers sacked with a further 50,000 to go. Living standards have fallen sharply. Malnutrition is said to affect nearly 50 per cent of the under-15 age-group and at least 30 per cent of the adult population. Health, education and transport services are in a sorry state.

Protest is getting vocal – quite literally. Pop singer PK Kalumba Chishala's single 'The Common Man' (sic) deals with the problems of survival and nearly every urban household has heard the song. The government, which employs Chishala as a social worker, has removed him from Lusaka to a remote provincial centre in Mansa far from any recording studios.

'Hunger, which affects even those in employment, is embarrassing the nation and its people,' says Chishala. 'What we eat is just not enough, not decent. During lunch hour, workers instead of lunching pretend to window-shop. They have no breakfast and supper is never enough to fill their bellies.' He tells trade union leaders to do their jobs properly: 'Tell them (government and



An African welcome of song and dance in happier times.

employers) on our behalf that our bellies are empty, we need food. They can hike the prices of everything else, but not food.'

For political leaders there seems to be no escaping the growing amount of tuneless criticism. Now it is common for barefoot song-makers, school-choir groups and others to welcome the Head of State with critical songs and pleas for better living conditions.

In Zambezi, North Western Province, Vice President Levy Mwanawasa was received by a women's group singing: 'We need medicines and better schools for our children, we need the road tarred like it is everywhere else and you promised.'

Another welcoming group in the drought-stricken Western Province told Chiluba: 'We sing with praise, but hunger is everywhere... we need decent food and decent living standards' – exactly what the Government has so far failed to do for most Zambians.

Elias Nyakutemba/Gemini

Buddhist agitation

Buddhists worldwide are agitated about a dispute between Hindus and Indian Buddhists over control of their holiest shrine at Gaya in the north Indian state of Bihar. The Mahabodhi Temple was built during Emperor Asoka's reign more than 2,500 years ago. It stands next to the Bodhi (wisdom) tree under which Siddharta Gautama attained enlightenment and came to be known as the Buddha. Since the turn of this century the shrine has been controlled by five Hindu and four Buddhist representatives. Buddhists are now demanding sole control. Last September thousands formed a human chain around the temple. The Chief Minister of Bihar has announced that he will resolve the issue. He'll need to remember what happened at the Ayodhya temple.

Gamini Navaratane/Gemini

Animal sun stroke

Although there are few figures, vets around Australia report a steep increase in the number of animals they treat with skin cancer. Most at risk are light-furred creatures of European descent: for instance white cats, white-faced Hereford cattle and English bull dogs. And when white



breeds of pigs are allowed to range freely in the Australian sun, their pale skin can turn a potentially cancerous shade of red. The RSPCA recommends that people keep their pets indoors between 11am and 3pm, when ultraviolet radiation is most intense. As a last resort, owners can apply sun block or zinc cream to the noses and ears of animals that stay out in the sun. But these could get licked off. At least that problem is unlikely for fair-skinned Australians.

From New Scientist, No 1857, 1993

YOU'VE GOT MORE TRADE EMBARGOS, TARIFFS + QUOTAS THAN FORT KNOX HAS IRON BARS!



ONLY YOU CALL THEM SUBSIDIES, ARRANGEMENTS AND (GET THIS!) NON-TARIFF BARRIERS!

coming next MONTH

Alice in Latasica

or the global debt crisis explained.

NEXT month's NI unravels the almighty mess via the pens and perceptions of campaigning cartoonist Brick and radical economist Susan George. They will address:

- What has Third World debt got to do with me?
- How did it all happen?
- Who does debt benefit?
- What's the 'debt boomerang'?

Good neighbours

Joseph Mobutu, President of Zaire – one of the world's richest men ruling one of the world's poorest countries – seems likely to retire from riot-torn Kinshasa to the Côte d'Azur in France, where he owns a pink and white marble palace set in 25 acres of garden, with an 82-foot outdoor swimming pool. He will be able to enjoy whist drives with his neighbours, Baby Doc Duvalier, General Michel Aoun and former Emperor Bokassa.



From The Guardian, 10 February 1993

CENTRAL AMERICA

And now for the good news...

Nothing but bad news – of civil war, death squads, genocide – seems to have come out of Central America for decades. But a kind of peace, however fragile, is returning. The people can begin to rebuild, count the cost and heal the wounds. We report from two of the worst-affected regions.



GARY PAYNE / GAMMA LIAISON

Repatriated refugee boys peep out of bus window, at La Mesilla border crossing.

Guatemala – 'Even the hills are talking to you.'

THOUSANDS of Guatemalan refugees who fled to Mexico a decade ago are returning home. Some 45,000 exiles have been living in muddy camps along Mexico's mountainous southern border since abandoning their country at the height of military violence in the early 1980s. But all the mainly indigenous, peasant refugees are expected to be home shortly after four years of tortuous negotiations between Guatemala, Mexico and the UN. The first 2,500 made the historic first crossing on 20 January this year.

Hot water

The Bolivian government has embarked upon a campaign to popularize a herbal tea called *mate de coca*. If this pleasant infusion captured only 5 per cent of the global market for hot drinks, Bolivia would have a bigger foreign exchange earner than its present main export: natural gas. There is a major snag, though. The tea is banned under the Vienna Convention on Narcotic Drugs – even though it is harmless – because it is brewed from the leaves of the coca bush.

From The Independent, London, 24 January 1993

Guatemala's 1992 Nobel Peace Prize winner Rigoberta Menchu was at the spectacular highland border-post of La Mesilla to greet them. 'I know what they are feeling,' she said. 'It's like a knot in the throat... as if even the hills are talking to you.' Guatemala's independent human rights attorney, Ramiro de Leon Carpio, described the event as 'a gear in the wheel that will take us to peace.'

Fighting in the last unresolved war in Central America is now only sporadic, but many of the refugees are still haunted by memories. 'I shall wait until more have returned home safely before I go back,' says Maria Lopez Mendez, a 33-year-old Mayan Indian whose last memory of her home was the screams of her parents dying inside their burning shack.

Teams of forensic and human rights experts are excavating mass graves in northern Guatemala and survivors of atrocities are emboldened to tell their stories for the first time. The conservative government of President Jorge Serrano Elias hopes that the repatriations will redeem his country's dire human rights record. He also claims the returnees are fleeing forced recruitment to rebel groups.

The government is donating some land for the refugees, but not enough. The next stage looks to be an attempt to settle thousands of claims to the returnees' former homes and farms – which is likely to meet strong resistance from those peasants currently in occupation.

Andrew Cawthorne/Mexico City

El Salvador – 'Reborn with the people.'

ONE year ago, in January 1992, the streets of San Salvador exploded in celebrations as guerillas signed a peace treaty with the Salvadorean government. After 12 years in the mountains and a civil war that left 75,000 dead, guerilla commanders rode in a cavalcade into the capital and joined the party in the main square. A huge banner appeared carrying the words of the murdered Archbishop Romero: 'I will be reborn with the people'.

A year later the celebrations are decidedly more muted. But El Salvador is still one of the UN's few peace-making successes. The ceasefire has held, the guerillas have handed in their weapons and the armed forces have been halved in size following the withdrawal



JEAN GAUMY / MAGNUM

Army check point, El Salvador.

of massive US military aid.

So much for the good news. Now, the bad. Under army pressure the Government is reneging on its commitment to sack the top 15 officers accused of human rights violations, including the Minister and Vice Minister of Defence. Death squad attacks on trade unionists and peasant organizers continue and violent crime has increased.

Meanwhile, action on the difficult social and economic questions which gave rise to the war has been postponed. El Salvador's rich coffee plantations remain in the hands of a tiny élite, while the majority of the population scrape a living from eroded land or live from hand to mouth in the capital, San Salvador.

But at least the terror of war is over, apparently for good. For the Salvadorean people and for the peacemaking reputation of the beleaguered UN this can only be good news.

Duncan Green/Latin America Bureau

Duncan Green is author of *Guatemala: Burden of Paradise*, with colour illustrations by John Keane, £7.99, published in November 1992 by Latin America Bureau, 1 Amwell Street, London EC1R 1UL, UK.

END

END Quote

Rich countries want peace and stability so that the old and contemptible agreements can go on existing: the relation between oppressor and oppressed, the bonds between tutor and pupil. This is the kind of stability that prevails over cemeteries.

F Sionil Jos, Filipino author



music

No Reservations

by Apache Indian (Island)

In its short and under-noticed history, ragga music – the fast-chatting cousin of reggae – has never known anything like this. The hail of bullets that opens **No Reservations** is not unexpected, for ragga is no different from reggae and rap in extolling the romance of the gangster stance. But when the boast 'Apache Indian! Hotter than vindaloo curry!' announces (in pure Jamaican dialect) the presence of the contender, you sit up.

But then Apache Indian is causing similar reactions on a daily basis. A young British Asian who has served time on the reggae sound systems of Birmingham, he chats in a fast mix of English, Punjabi and Jamaican patois. Establishing a large, multicultural fan base amongst followers of ragga and the Asian genre of bhangra, Apache is certainly one of the most interesting manifestations of musical cross-cultures to date.

Unlike other British bhangra musicians who have looked to house music, disco or pop as natural musical partners, Apache – a former welder – turned his attention to ragga. The results have the simplicity of a brilliant idea. Hard-edged tabla accompanies the bass lines and songs like *Chok There*, *Don Raja* and *Move Over India* move like a massive rhythmical machine. Maxi Priest makes a guest appearance on *Fe Real* but **No Reservations** is really a showcase for Apache's remarkable loquacity. References to Ravi Shankar, Gandhi, Amritsar and the Taj Mahal flash past. Singing 'Raggamuffin in the style of Pathan', his subject matter – arranged marriages and warnings against AIDS, alcoholism and gurus – smack of a pertinent social realism.

It's tempting to read Apache as the latest in the English Midlands tradition of cross-cultural pop which includes Birmingham's soft-reggae outfit, UB40, and Coventry's late great ska revival that centred upon Two-Tone Records. However this can't explain Apache's extraordinary appeal. A supremely self-confident figure with a sardonic gleam in his eye, he has all the makings of a new teenage sex symbol. His effortless slide between dialects comes across as an eminently sensible response to his particular street



The Contender: Apache Indian.

culture. Moreover he has penetrated to the heart of the jealously hermetic reggae culture, winning the Reggae Industry's Best Newcomer trophy last year. And that is no mean feat.

Politics ★★★★★

Entertainment ★★★★★



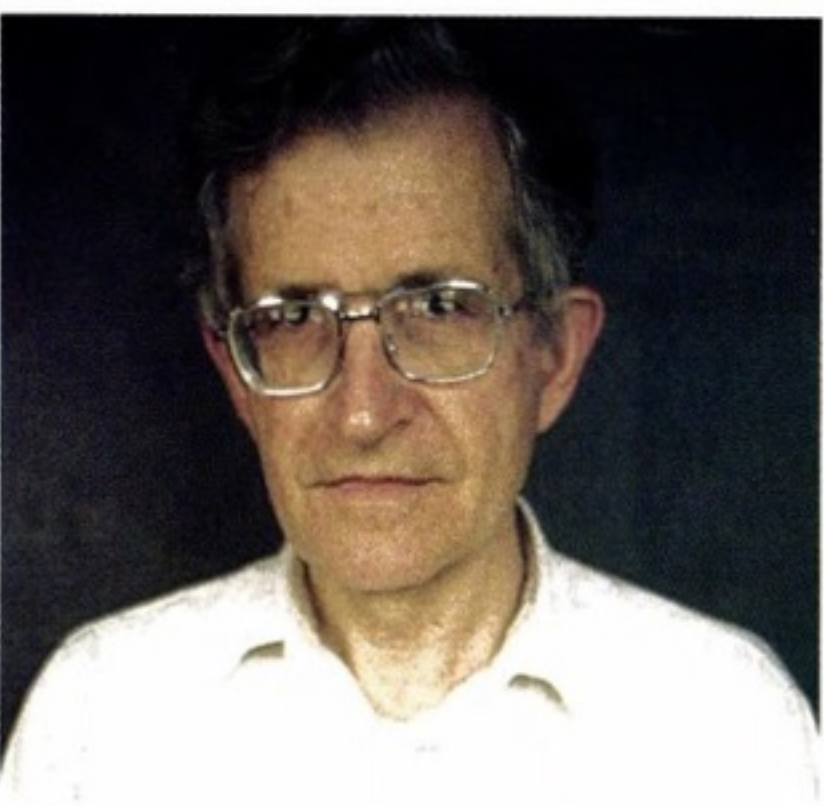
film

Manufacturing Consent

directed by Peter Wintonick and Mark Achbar

That 'Noam Chomsky is arguably the most important intellectual alive' should be a good reason to make a movie about him. How this claim was made by the *New York Times*, coupled with the fact that he is not that well known precisely because major media such as the *Times* tend to exclude him are among the intriguing anecdotes in the film **Manufacturing Consent: Noam Chomsky and the Media**. However, the film is significantly more than a collection of anecdotes. The five years of serious effort that two Canadian film-makers, Peter Wintonick and Mark Achbar, put

The Visionary: Noam Chomsky.



into producing and directing this 160-minute opus have resulted in much more than just another documentary.

An instant and natural hit among those who have read *Necessary Illusions*, *Deterring Democracy*, or his current work *Year 501: The Conquest Continues*, this film may also serve as an introduction for those who have never heard of Chomsky. Hardly a blockbuster – in fact containing both subtle and explicit criticism of mass entertainment itself – the film has definitely crossed over in North America from the documentary and art-house circuit. It is having some impact on the mainstream, which is a delicious irony for students of propaganda as they read the hasty reviews of the film concocted by a mainstream press caught between a rock of apologetics and a reactionary hard place. Sadly distributors are not leaping forward to take the film in Australasia and the UK at the moment.

The film gives a good biographical sense of the great US linguist whose revolutionary work in the theory of syntax caused ripples to be felt in psychology and computer science. If only his radical critique of US policy in Vietnam, Central America, the Gulf and closer to home over the last three decades had achieved such pre-eminent influence... The film shows Chomsky at work now, which means not pondering over abstruse linguistic formulations but rather out on the stump or being interviewed on public radio as one of the world's most energetic and respected activists. As you watch and listen you are above all struck by his sheer common sense; and common sense of this kind has never been more needed.

Politics ★★★★★

Entertainment ★★★★★

Crush

directed by Alison Maclean

The title says it all: one of those crisp and teasing names that capture a slew of meanings in one syllable. Violent and passionate, the young New Zealander writer/director Maclean's idiosyncratic film debut wears the word well. Set in what seems to be an eternally gloomy city – Rotorua is Aotearoa's geothermal hot spot and also a Maori sacred place – **Crush** is immediately enveloped by a foreboding sense of oppressive instability. This is a place where the mud bubbles and the blood boils – primeval, slippery and raw.

Against this backdrop, a sinister melodrama is played out when the alluring and reckless drifter Lane, played by the compulsively watchable Marcia Gay

Harden, arrives from the US to disrupt the lives of those drawn to her. Travelling with her close friend, a literary critic on a visit to an author, Lane sets the ball of damnation rolling when she crashes the car and abandons her companion for dead.

Crush is very visceral – but emotionally so. One could call it a horror film and reclaim the word from the blood and gore merchants. For this is a disquieting and disorientating film that chills to the bone rather than merely making the flesh crawl with unsightly prosthetics. But Maclean also presents it as the mood of contemporary New Zealand, overcast by a bigger presence: read the film as an allegory and Lane embodies the brash spirit of the US with which



Rolling damnation in *Crush*.

the younger country is dangerously infatuated, buttoning down its own sense of self in the process. Indeed the national identity only surfaces in the tourist-orientated style of Maori-chanting rugby teams and the abandoned theme-park atmosphere of Rotorua. **Crush** represents the bad dream out of which the country must wake.

Politics ★★

Entertainment ★★★★★



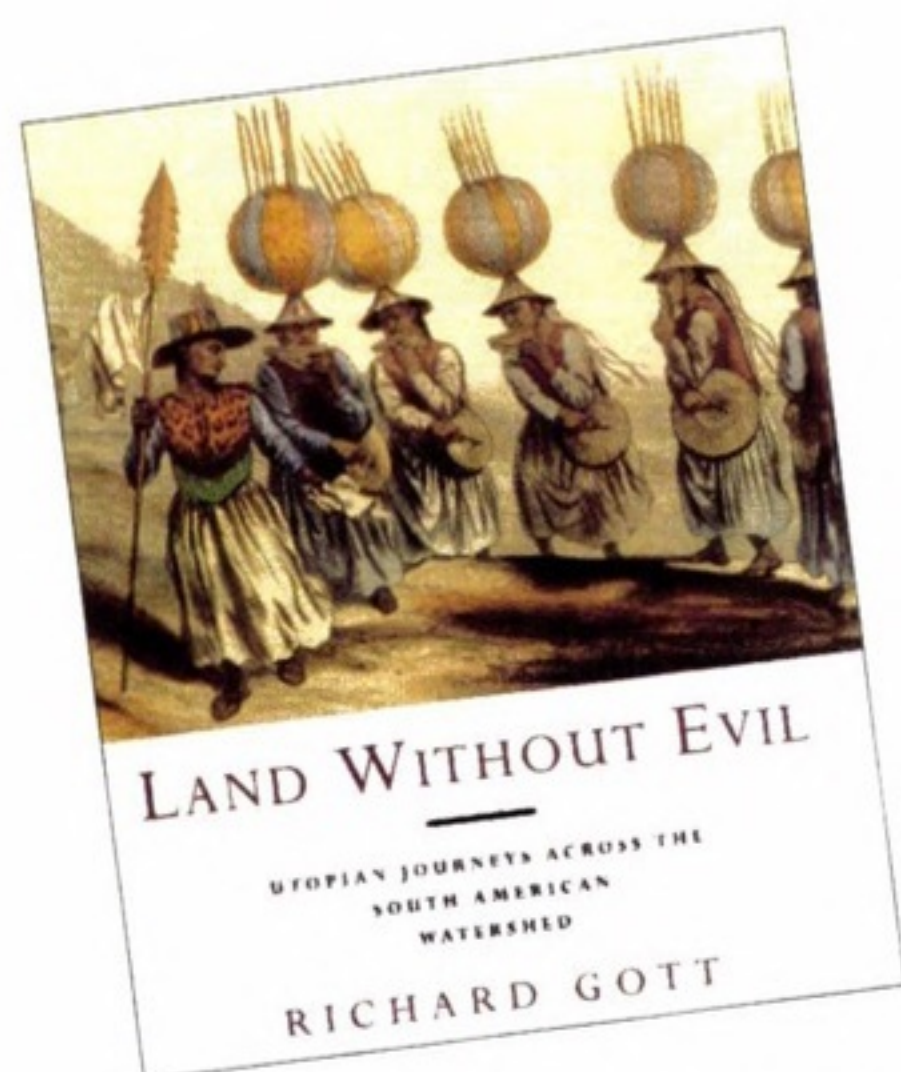
books

Land Without Evil

by Richard Gott (Verso)

'Disaster struck in the late eighteenth century,' writes Richard Gott, 'because the Jesuits, like the enthusiasts for Third World development today, could only operate within a framework of thought and action devised in the colonial metropolis.'

This is a strange, and strangely compelling, book. In a trice you are whisked from a scholarly reading of texts on, say, the Jesuits' pioneering 'strategic hamlets' of the Upper Paraguay river in the sixteenth century to, say, the motor-scooter taxis of the Bolivian Beni. It's a heady, three-dimensional jaunt across the history and dirt tracks of a forgotten watershed between Brazil, Paraguay and Bolivia.



Sometimes you feel that Gott is riding an infernal, shapeless machine of his own construction that never quite arrives at an undisclosed destination. If you like to read travel books for tips on the kind of footwear you need for trips you're never seriously likely to take then this book isn't really for you – as a story it has its *longueurs*. As to the contribution it makes to an historical appreciation of the region Gott himself is disarmingly doubtful; the place should have its own historians but lacks the cash for more than one pinprick study every decade or so.

The compensations are, however, hugely rewarding. He ends a crisp account of an expedition in 1913 by a bored ex-President of the US, Theodore Roosevelt, by observing that they 'plunged into the unknown interior with very little understanding of what they would find... Few had much interest in the people they met.' You get the feeling that Gott himself is an exemplary traveller to whom you should listen, not least because he is exploring that most undiscovered and perplexing territory of all – the fragile record of human history.

This makes disturbing reading for anyone with a European faith in linear progress. A place of abundant prosperity has, progressively over the centuries since the European invasion, declined to a depopulated and impoverished wasteland, its central physical feature – the great Pantanal wetlands – glimpsed only fleetingly by the TV audience of a defunct Brazilian soap opera. Millions of slaughtered Indians would have no memorial without this curious account. Enthusiasts for 'development' beware.

Politics ★★★★★

Entertainment ★★★★★

STAR RATING

Excellent ★★★★★

Very good ★★★★★

Good ★★★★★

Fair ★★★★★

Poor ★★★★★

Reviews editor: Chris Brazier

THE classic

Gramsci

... being the writer who explained the resilience of capitalism (and how to undermine it)

MANY readers in capitalist cultures have considerable difficulties with Marxist writing. It is not simply that Marxism has probably been belittled, suppressed or ignored throughout their education, and that its ideas thus appear strange when first encountered. It is also that much of the most celebrated Marxist writing does not seem very helpful in suggesting how to remedy social and economic problems in the here and now. Trotsky's *Permanent Revolution* might have offered Russians the right prescriptions for toppling Tsarism (even if they weren't followed) but it isn't clear how anyone in present-day Hong Kong could view that book as anything other than an historical curiosity. Marx's own *Capital* is a monumental analysis of nineteenth-century industrialism but it would need a major revision if it were to address the perplexing difficulties of life now in the reunified country of his birth.

Today most socialists recognize that there are no universal rules, applicable in all times and in all places, which will ensure the inevitable passing away of capitalism. However, the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937) came of age in a period when many Marxists adhered to a contrary doctrine which he came to characterize as 'economism'. Socialist economism was the belief that the economy works independently of all human will and that, in time, capitalism would inevitably crumble under its own weight. A drastically selective reading of Marx allowed many to espouse the notion of the historical inevitability of communism, which would follow capitalism as surely as night follows day. Political intervention, in this scenario, was not only unnecessary, but entirely pointless. In his early writing in the Italian socialist press, Gramsci constantly attacked such complacency, stressing the importance of political action and the errors of handling certain Marxist ideas as if they were a catechism.

In one of his earliest articles, entitled 'The Revolution Against Capital' (1917), he brilliantly analyzed the recent events in Russia as disproving Marx's argument that such a revolution could only occur in an economy that had gone through a capitalist phase. His explanation of this event was heresy to those who subscribed to economism: he put the case that people, through their conscious political decisions, control the economy and not vice versa. Later, in a piece on the situation in Italy (written in 1926, by which time Mussolini had taken power), he drew the



further heterodox conclusion that capitalism in many cases might only be overthrown where it was weak and undeveloped. This posed for him the problem which he was to spend the rest of his short life investigating: how were socialists to conceive their role in strong, advanced and apparently impervious capitalist states?

Gramsci's thought and writing falls into two distinct phases: the vigorous and thoughtful journalism conducted until his imprisonment by Mussolini in November 1926; and then the prison notebooks he maintained until his early death. While his imprisonment was a tragedy and an outrage, the enforced seclusion gave Gramsci

a unique vantage-point on modern politics. It ensured that he did not fall into the abyss of Stalinism which engulfed many active communists in this period. Furthermore it concentrated his mind on the project of explaining the resilience of capitalism in countries where its days had seemed numbered. The prison notebooks in which his theories were expounded have only come to be known internationally in the last 25 years but it is generally agreed that they present

the most original ideas in Marxism since Marx himself. Their prevailing theme is how capitalism manages to sustain itself, but how its power, even when it seems absolute, can always be undermined.

There isn't space to explain all of Gramsci's rich repository of new ideas – on popular culture, education, the role of intellectuals, 'historical bloc', 'civil society', 'common sense', 'war of manoeuvre' and 'war of position' – although one idea, 'hegemony', is too important to pass over. Hegemony, briefly, is the process whereby ruling groups of any kind gain consent from the ruled without having to resort to physical intimidation or enforcement. It allows Gramsci to explain the important role of social institutions such as church, school and media, with a sophistication that makes other Marxist dealings with them look extremely crude.

None of these ideas are difficult to understand but in combination they offer a powerful reading of why capitalism has refused to topple like a set of ninepins before the bowling ball of socialism. But Gramsci offers numerous resources of hope too, for he gives a whole new vocabulary and strategy to anti-capitalist politics, a different spin to the ball. After coming to grips with his thought, those pins look a little easier to knock down. ■

Macdonald Daly

Gramsci's writing is best sampled in *A Gramsci Reader*, edited by David Forgacs and published by Lawrence & Wishart.



QUESTIONS

...that have always intrigued you about the world will appear in this, your section, and be answered by other readers. Please address your answers and questions to 'Curiosities'.

By eating animals reared on crops grown in Third World countries am I helping such countries to get foreign currency and break out of the debt trap or should I refrain from meat-eating in the hope that crops will be redirected to the mouths of the poor?

● There is no simple answer. One certainty is that the Third World's debt will never be repaid on the strength of earnings on cash



FAO

crops. Global trading patterns and terms of international trade must be modified and the thorny question of debt relief addressed.

Ultimately a state's or region's agriculture must be directed towards producing food in a sustainable way for the population's consumption, not to meet the luxury needs of others. But refraining from meat-eating alone will not put food crops back into the mouths of the Third World's poor.

What we can do is exercise 'consumer power' by buying food derived from sustainable, organic farming, lobby for more equal terms of trade and put pressure on our governments and banks to reduce the Third World debt burden.

Timothy Strang (Farmers World Network member)
Lampeter, Cymru, UK

Is it true that the UK is still paying for the World War One and to whom?

● Yes, the cost being borne through taxation and borrowing from individuals and institutions in Britain and elsewhere. But the British Government of the time was able to borrow on very favourable terms with the result that

98 per cent of the original value of the loan has disappeared through inflation.

The direct financial cost question is fairly easy to answer, but what about the hidden costs? Was it World War One which started Britain's industrial decline? And what about the cost of the race for sophisticated and expensive armaments into which that war plunged us?

Angus Skene
Stafford, UK

● It could be suggested that we pay the elderly veterans who fought in that war in the form of their tiny pensions.

C Holt
Bristol, UK

Who first used the expression 'charity begins at home', to whom and why?

● The phrase goes back earlier than suggested by the two correspondents in NI 241. It was first used by Publius Terentius Afer (more commonly known as Terence), a major Roman comic dramatist. He was born in Carthage in about 185 BC, taken to Rome as a slave and then earned both an education and his freedom by impressing his masters with his abilities. He wrote comedies from which the modern comedies of manners are loosely descended. The phrase comes from one of his plays but unfortunately I do not know any more about the play in question.

Mark Pack
York, UK

AWAITING YOUR ANSWERS

What are the origins and meaning of the expression 'ethnic cleansing'? Who first used it?

Kathleen Jones
Bishops Castle, UK

Mosquitoes and other insects insert the equivalent of a micro needle into a variety of human bloods. So why are they not in the list of transmitters of HIV?

RG Sargent
Looe, UK

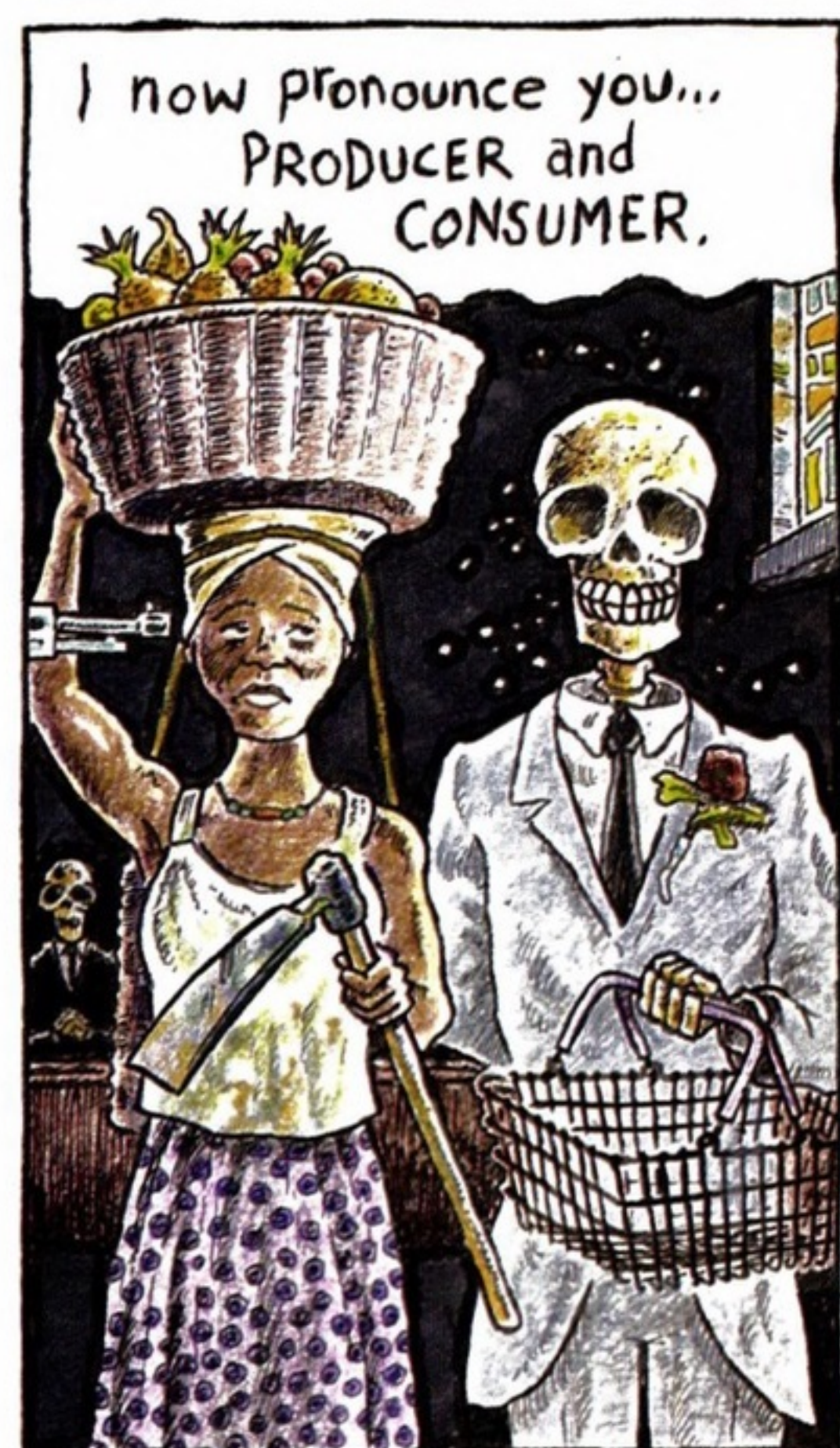
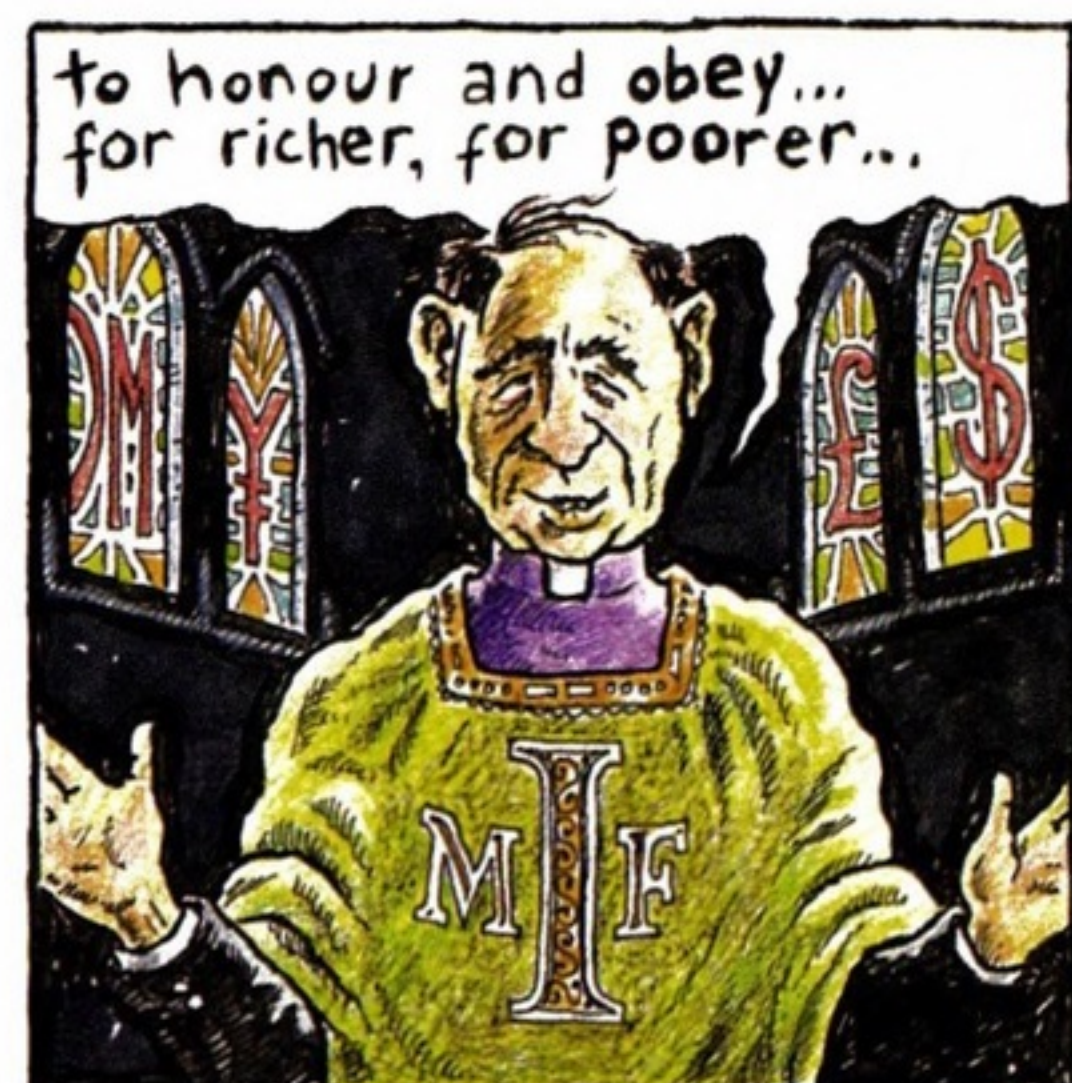
Why is the depletion of the ozone layer greatest in the southern hemisphere when the use of ozone-destroying chemicals is greatest in the northern hemisphere?

G Roberts
Llandona, Cymru, UK

I've heard that part of the ceremony of Pope-making involves touching of the testicles. If this is true, how and why did this curious custom come about?

Guy Lambert
Oxford, UK

If you have any questions or answers please send them to Curiosities, **New Internationalist**, 55 Rectory Road, Oxford OX4 1BW, UK, or to your local NI office (see inside front cover for addresses).



Operation Humiliation

Rakiya Omaar was kicked out of her director's job at Africa Watch, the US-controlled human rights organization, for saying the US 'rescue mission' to her native Somalia was doing more harm than good. On a trip home she discovers that the Somali voice isn't being heard there either...

TODAY it is a curse to be an educated Somali. To you I seem normal, appearing to cope. But everyday I feel I die a little inside, from humiliation and frustration.'

Adbi is the most senior Somali in a large relief organization in Somalia. His eyes welled with tears as he spoke of the demoralization and marginalization of Somalis in their own country.

I was back in the Somali capital, Mogadishu, for the first time since civil war erupted a little over a year ago. I thought I was well prepared for what I was going to see. In the past few years every encounter with another Somali had led me to anticipate nothing but pain and tales of loss.

As director of the human rights group Africa Watch for four-and-half years, with special responsibility for research in Somalia, I had been immersed in chronicling Somalia's nightmares and the cruelties that awaited even those who managed to escape abroad.

I had interviewed hundreds of Somalis who spoke of the killing, torture and imprisonment of loved ones; of watching their children die of starvation in front of their eyes and of the destruction of their homes, villages and towns. I had seen their shame at the poverty that war had reduced them to.

Yet I was quite unprepared for the indignities of what it means, on a day-to-day basis, to live in a country with no central government. Somalis had no reason to mourn the death of Mohamed Siad Barre. The corruption, manipulation of clan identities and fear fuelling Somalia's violence are the direct legacy of his 21-year dictatorship. But his demise does not alter the stark realities facing Somalis today – both rural and urban.

In Mogadishu and other towns there are no government institutions which can provide work. There is no banking system, no national airline, no telephone or postal system. The only schools are religious and dominated by fundamentalists. There are a few private schools with virtually no resources, where volunteer teachers attempt to keep some children from lapsing into illiteracy and to win boys away from the gun culture. Most schools, and even the university, have become centres for the displaced. Aid organizations and the few UN agencies operating in Somalia are the only employers for educated Somalis.

I visited Farah, a relief worker who graduated from a western university and who has a wealth of field experience. He pointed out to me a relatively inexperienced young expatriate working in his office. Farah is the young man's boss and earns the equivalent of \$250 a month in local currency. Because he is an expatriate, the young man gets \$3,000 in hard currency, plus 25 per cent hardship allowance, free lodging, food, water and a host of other benefits.

As a Somali, Farah is lucky to have a job. But most Somalis with jobs today also bear the tremendous burden of a large extended family to support, including many members who have

been displaced by war and who are in desperate need.

Ambassador Robert Oakley, the US special envoy to Somalia, recently expressed 'surprise' that there were so many of what he called 'middle class' people left in the country. That the US was either ignorant of the fact or made no effort to find out before the launch of Operation Restore Hope speaks volumes about the gross misrepresentations of Somali realities that preceded the operation.

The majority of the people Oakley calls 'middle class' are jobless but in spite of this abundance of trained and experienced people with nothing to do, the UN is reluctant to hire them. Instead, scores of young and unqualified foreigners are taken on. A senior UN official announced the other day that the UN were 'unable' to fill about 80 positions created for Somalis. He blamed what he called a 'cult of suspicion' towards Somalis and said there was no enthusiasm to hire them.

But what really hurts is not jobs or money. It's the daily humiliations I experienced and saw during my month in Somalia, the invisibility and lack of independence of Somalis, as foreigners make decisions about their country. The war and the prevalence of gun-fighters have forced agencies to tighten security. If you are Somali it is virtually impossible to gain access to their buildings. While you plead with the guards you watch white people enter, no questions asked. Former Government officials who are today refused entry recall the days when relief officials came to visit them in their offices.

Men and women who used to make decisions about the qualifications of foreigners to work in Somalia are now powerless. Six months ago a UN agency decided to create an agricultural advisory board. Some of the country's most experienced agricultural specialists decided to apply for the posts, only to find that the man interviewing them was the young expatriate son of a foreign colleague who had worked with them in Somalia 15 years earlier.

There are of course thoughtful foreign aid workers who express discomfort that their 'local' counterparts are so much more experienced and better qualified than they are. The local professionals, meanwhile, are left feeling that they were recruited only for their knowledge of the local situation, as if their professional qualifications and experiences were irrelevant.

Because there is no communications system it is hard for the international media to get to hear the Somali voice. People like Abdi and Farah could have left the country, as have many of their fellow citizens. They chose to remain. But having survived the worst of the fighting, many are so demoralized that they question the value of staying put. 'I don't want to leave my country,' Farah commented. 'But how long can one continue in this situation?' ■

Since leaving Africa Watch, **Rakiya Omaar** has become co-director of a new London-based human rights organization called African Rights.



Rakiya Omaar (top left), sacked for speaking out against the US intervention in Somalia (above).

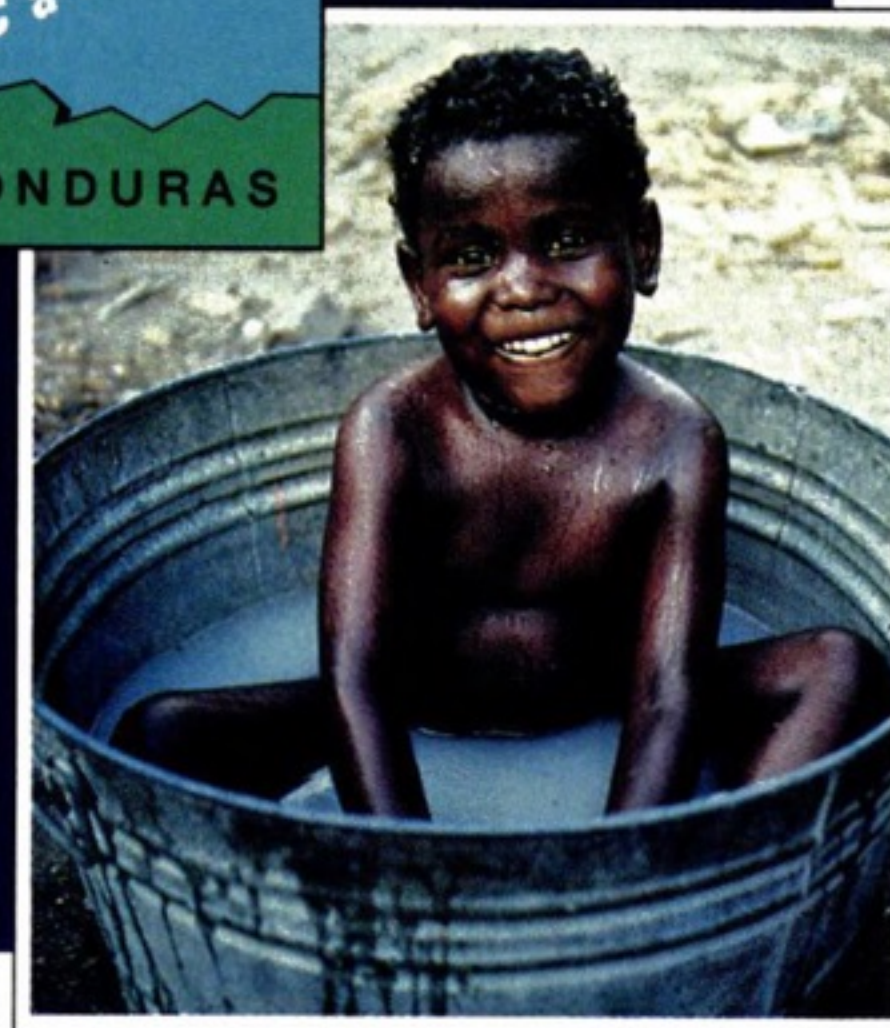
BENOIT GYSEMBERGH / CAMERA PRESS, JEREMY HARTLEY / PANOS PICTURES (INSET)

Belize

BELIZE, formerly British Honduras, is the only English-speaking country in Central America. It was originally inhabited by Maya Indians in settlements away from the swampy coast, which is unfit for agriculture. British pirates established a coastal foothold in what was then called 'New Spain'.

The pirates were commissioned by Britain to harass Spanish shipping. But after the 1670 Treaty of Madrid, they settled on the coast and imported African slave labour to harvest logwood. Before long slaves made up the majority of the population. After the abolition of slavery, Europeans encouraged them to continue cutting logs and think of farming as suitable only for Indians. As a result Belize still has to import much of its food, despite the existence of some active Mennonite farming communities.

After the collapse of the logwood markets, the country turned to sugar production. But in the 1980s prices fell. Cane farmers sought alternative cash crops and found marijuana – one commodity whose value hadn't diminished. Marijuana brought a little prosperity to northern Belize, but it also attracted government action to curtail the trade.



The main town, Belize City, is not a pleasant place, with a high crime rate and open sewers running along streets. Poverty is extreme and even luxury areas look shoddy. Most tourists quickly make for either the Maya sites inland or the congenial coral reefs off the Cayes islands.

Because of the lack of

employment many young adults emigrate. The community has been affected by the drugs trade which smuggles cocaine through Belize.

As Belizians leave, Spanish-speaking refugees and immigrants come in. Locals complain that the newcomers don't try to integrate, and tempers flare. But

many Central American refugees are *campesinos* whose farming skills are needed in the country. Asians bring development capital, some of which is funding the current construction boom in Belize City.

One of Belize's greatest resources is its tropical rainforest. Despite land purchases by companies including Coca Cola, much of the forest is intact. Belize needs its own cheap energy but oil prospecting and hydro-electric power schemes threaten to destroy wildlife and forest areas.

Eco-tourism poses another threat to the environment. As certain Maya sites become more popular, they are made more accessible. Along the river route to Laminiae for instance, wildlife and cactus-vines wrapped about trees like snakes are a spectacular draw for tourists. But if resorts and large riverboats are built, the increase in people will damage the very attractions the visitors seek.

Belize has been independent for 11 years and clearly needs continued foreign support. The most visible British contribution is some troops and jets – the legacy of years of territorial wrangling with Guatemala which may now be over.

Rick McDaniel

AT A glance

Excellent ★★★★★
Good ★★★★
Fair ★★★
Poor ★★
Appalling ★



INCOME DISTRIBUTION ★★

Disparity between employed and jobless

1985: ★★★



SELF-RELIANCE ★★

Export crops vulnerable; need to import food and fuel.

1985: ★★★



POSITION OF WOMEN ★★

Can vote. Most jobs go to men.

1985: ★★

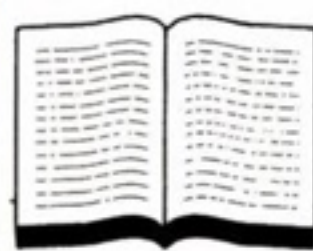


POLITICS

Centre right; President has executive power.



1984



LITERACY ★★★

Official figure is 93% but estimates nearer 65%.

1985: ★★★★★



FREEDOM ★★★★★

Universal adult suffrage; press freedom.

1985: ★★★★★



LIFE EXPECTANCY ★★★★★

68 years (US 76 years).

1985: ★★★★★

Leader Prime Minister George Price
Economy GNP per capita \$1,970 (US \$21,790)
Monetary unit Belize dollar

Main exports: Sugar, citrus pulp, clothing, bananas and fish products.

Main imports: Machinery, food, manufactured goods, fuel, chemicals. In agriculture, emphasis switched to bananas and citrus fruits as sugar production fell. Other export crops are winter vegetables, papayas, mangoes and cocoa. Local foods grown include rice, maize/corn, roots, beans and vegetables. Some dairying and fishing (lobsters, conch and shrimp). Tourism is expanding.

People 194,000

Health Infant mortality 23 per 1,000 live births (US 9 per 1,000).

Culture Maya civilization flourished until around 1,000 AD. British colony from 1884. In 1981 became an independent state within the Commonwealth. Majority Afro-Belizian population; also Mayan Indians, Hispanics and Asians.

Religion: Christian (including Mennonite) and local religions.

Languages: English, Spanish and local languages.

Sources: *The State of the World's Children 1993* and *The Americas Review 1991/92*.

Last profiled in February 1985

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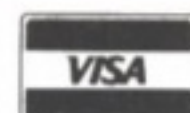
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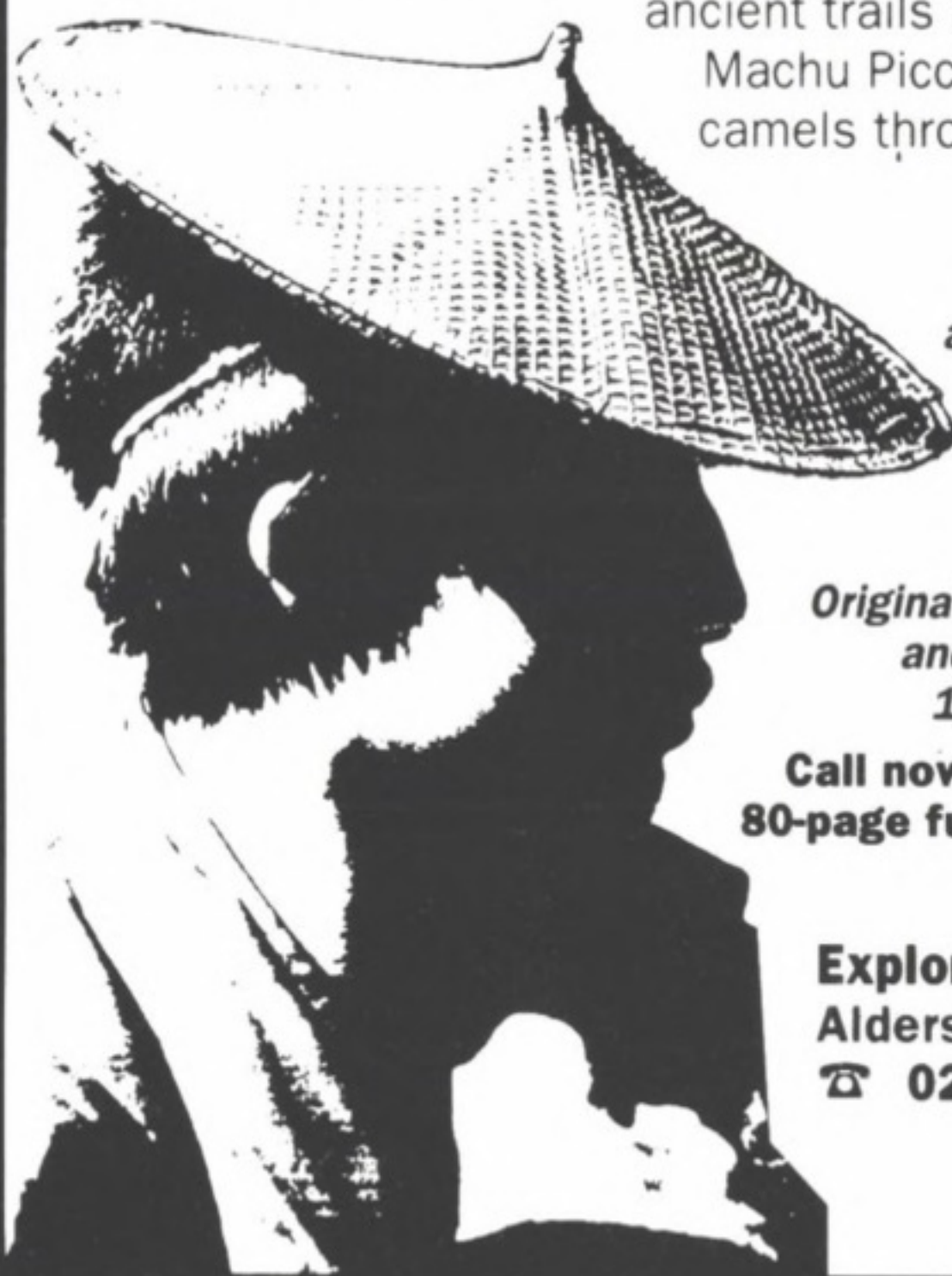
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